

THE BODY ISSUE
WHAT YOU REALLY THINK ABOUT YOUR BODY!

Bad boys ink
Why do we love the tattoo look?

Hair today...
How do you cope with the fall out?

Katie Price
Would you pay to look like her?

GE15
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Years & Years
Meet the gay new face of pop

Daredevil
Charlie Cox is Marvel's hero

GAME OF THRONES
Reece Noi strikes a pose

Avengers assemble! Again!

CHRIS EVANS

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[05/15] We can be heroes

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Assistant Editor RYAN BUTCHER
Editorial Assistant WILLIAM CONNOLLY
Design & Art Direction MARK KING
Editor-at-large JOHN MARRS
Style STEPHEN CONWAY
Music BOB HENDERSON
Columnists 2 LOVELY GAYS, LUKE ALEXANDER, MICHAEL ALIG, PJ BRENNAN, BENJAMIN COHEN, GASTRO GAYS, THE GUYLINER, CHRIS JONES, EDD KIMBER, MICHELLE VISAGE, MIKEY WALSH
Contributors MICHAEL AMATT, DR HARPAL BAINS, EDDIE BLAGROUGH, JAMES BURTON, BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH, SIMON BUTTON, MARK BYRON, CHARELLE CAWTHORN, MATT CROCKETT, EDWARD DYSON, ROBERT GERSHINSON, MIKE HIRD, EVAN HUANG, ALISON KYLE, THOMAS LING, JOE MCCORMICK, SIAN MACLEOD, CHRIS MANDLE, TIM MITCHELL, JUSTIN MYERS, MATT RISLEY, LUKE SMITH, DR ANITA STURNHAM, LILY-BETH THAKE
Pug-at-large TOBY
Cover image ARMANDO GALLO

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Design & Production Manager
ALEXANDER SMITH
Media Copy Sales & Marketing Manager
GAVIN MURPHY
Management Accountant ARNAUD SEGUIN

GT Advertising Sales ASH ALLIBHAI
020 7424 7406 ash@millivres.co.uk
GT Advertising Sales RAJ VALENTINO
020 7424 7457 raj@gaytimes.co.uk
Classified Advertising Sales JOAO VASCONCELOS
020 7424 7451 jo@gaytimes.co.uk

Editorial 020 7424 7400 **Fax** 020 7424 7401
Sales/Distribution 020 7424 7400 **Fax** 020 7424 7401
Editorial e-mail edit@gaytimes.co.uk
Advertising e-mail advertising@gaytimes.co.uk
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Chief Executive SIMON TOPHAM
Strategy Director JAMES FROST
Media & Marketing Director KIM WATSON F IDM
Operations Director ROBERT HANWELL
Financial Director ANTHONY MARTIN

Email edit@gaytimes.co.uk
Facebook gaytimes
Twitter @gaytimesmag
Instagram gaytimesmag
Snapchat gaytimesmag

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[contents]





first
06 GT Fitty
12 Michelle Visage
14 Josh Groban
16 David Beckham
20 Michael Urie
22 Mikey Walsh
24 Sweetie, Darling?

news
26 David Cameron
30 Ed Miliband
32 Nick Clegg

features
38 Chris Evans
46 The GT Body Survey
54 Body: Do you measure up?
58 Body: Hair today...
64 Body: Tattoos
70 Charlie Cox
74 Years and Years

style
80 Double trouble
84 Reece Noi
92 Grooming

entertainment
98 Kelly Clarkson
102 Imelda Staunton
104 Movies
107 Geek
108 Tech

real life
111 Readers' Lives
112 Is the Price right?
117 Michael Alig
119 Benjamin Cohen
120 The Guyliner
123 Positive Luke
125 PJ Brennan
126 Fit with Chris Jones
131 2 Lovely Gays
132 Home style
134 Edd Kimber
135 Gastro Gays
136 Modern Family

travel
138 Newquay



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 13 MAY

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



I've never been, in particular, all about being 'fit'. By either definition. Firstly, I'm quite lazy. Secondly, I don't believe that having a ripped, muscular body will make me 'fit' in the sense of it making me attractive. So I've just plodded along – sometimes literally – as I am. While I've never been particularly fat, I've certainly been significantly large at times, and I'm definitely more than a little bit wobbly now. I could spout some life-affirming 'meme-esque' quote about loving yourself, and all that palaver, but if you don't already, you're most likely not going to listen. As I write this, I've started a 'detox'. After I agreed to said detox, I was told it would include a 'work out' three times a week. We'll see about that. But the point is, I'm willing to make a change – and not because I want to have a summer body or washboard abs. I just don't want to go up another size in trousers. Why's that? That's a state of mind, surely. Because I'm not influenced by bodies on billboards, posters or magazines. And neither should you be... Everyone has their body issues, and that's what we're looking at this month, in an in-depth GT survey, as well as several features focusing on other body parts rather than just your torso. Of course, the other significant change you could – or should – be contributing to this month is more political than physical, with the General Election looming. Slightly condescending, I apologise, but please vote. You have no right to complain if things don't go your way, otherwise. And then we're hopefully one step nearer towards one of us at least being in better shape... ■

Darren Scott @darren_scott



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WORDS WILLIAM CONNOLLY **IMAGES** MATT CROCKETT











He spent most of his time on The Apprentice half-naked and has gone on to fill the internet with his topless selfies – so what better excuse than to strip the reality TV favourite and snap him at this best. Confidence levels at breaking point, Solomon Akhtar is this month's GT Fitty...

Do you think your time on The Apprentice reflected you accurately? Yeah, definitely – really accurately. The Apprentice is one of those shows where it's real life; it's not scripted. Getting to the final five and being portrayed like I was in real life was great.

Do you think being open and vulnerable got you as far as you did? I went into it not knowing what to expect at all. And yeah, when I got thrown into a room with Nick, Karen and Lord Sugar; I was in awe. It was a massive moment for me. I just kind of put a smile on my face and cracked a few jokes, you know? And I slipped up flirting with a few girls.

And your onscreen bromance with James, too? [Laughs] I know, I have SO much love for that boy. You know what, since the show, James and I get on so well.

Have people continued to interact with you since? I'm The Apprentice candidate with the most Twitter followers, other than Mark the winner, which I'm really proud of. Same on Instagram, too. Like, I'm not afraid to take topless pictures, or share random stuff



from my life that's happened.

Are topless pictures something you've always posted? I prefer to be topless and free than restrained by clothes. I don't just take loads of topless selfies – I take them about my life. So if I'm out and about, or at a gig or something and I'm taking a picture, or if I'm at home just laying on my sofa topless, then that's just me relaxing. I quite like to cook topless as well. When you cook topless, it's easier to clean up.

Clothes are optional with you, then? Basically, yeah. [Laughs]

Are you happy with the way that you look? Yeah, yeah, yeah! I'm really confident with the way I look.

What one thing would you change, if any? One thing I'd change? I don't know... I don't think I'd change anything. It's good to be happy with the body you've got.

Where's the best place someone could take you on a date? Oh my God! My favourite date, definitely the aquarium, 100%, 'cos I love fish. This is a massive talking point if you're on a date. I think fish are quite like me – they're both active and random, and I can resonate with that.

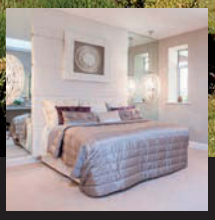
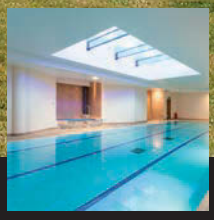
Where would be a big no-no? In a cinema you don't get that, you can't even see the person. But I did get off with a girl in the cinema once, on a first date when I was, like, 15.

How do you feel about guys looking at all your pictures? I have so many gay friends – it doesn't really matter if it's girls or boys. I mean, I'm straight, but I don't mind [laughs].

What are you doing now the show has ended? I'm doing a speaking tour around universities, talking about business. And I've also been doing evenings and club events. Plus, a topless shoot for GT! It's a massive thing for me... I haven't done any topless pictures before. Well, asides from the selfies. ■

solomonakhtar.com, @sollyakhtar

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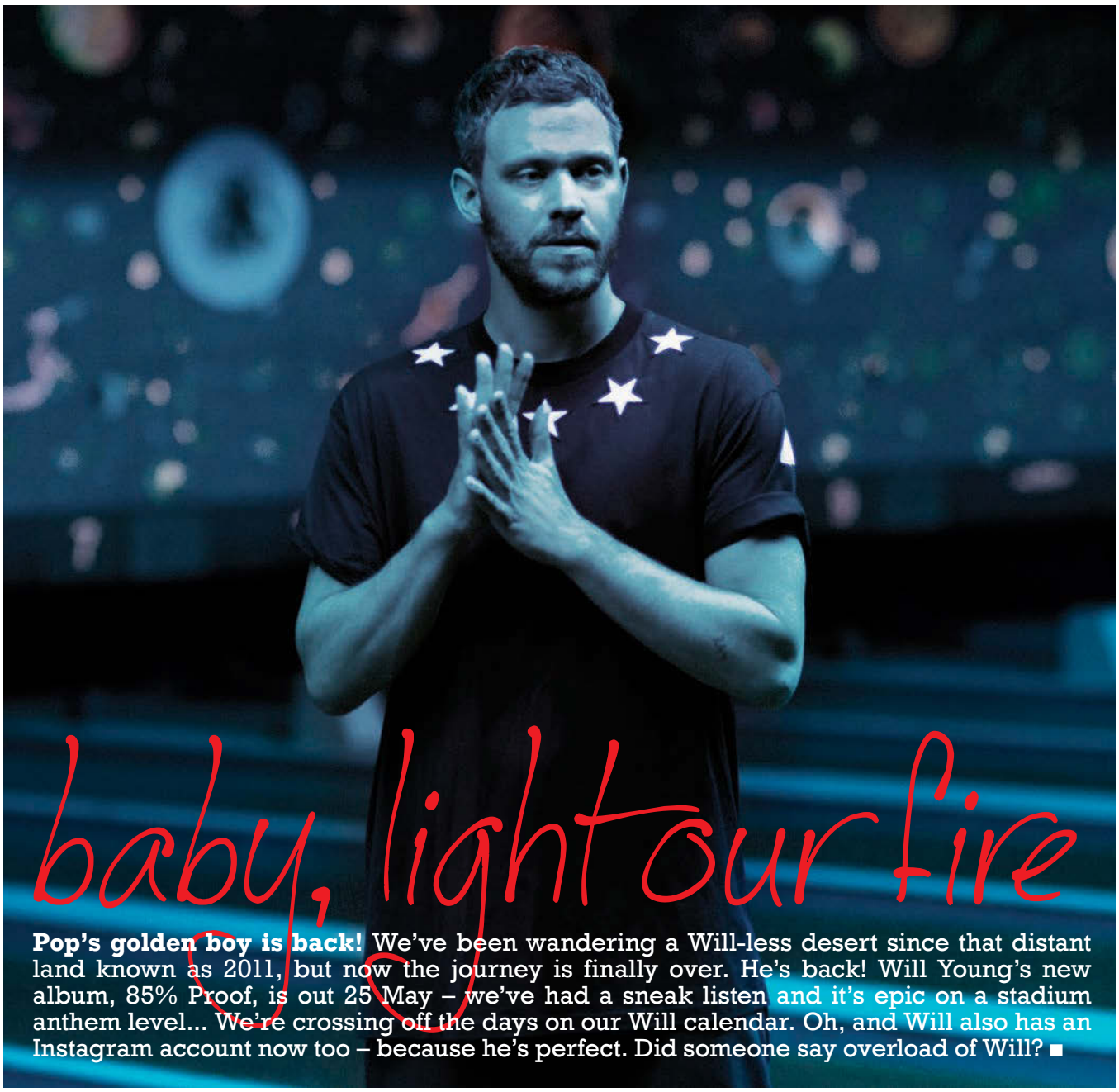


Move over Poldark...
Sorry Aidan Turner, the Beeb have got more buff blokes up their sleeves – and these one's are inked. In fact, tattoos play more than just a small part in new drama Tatau, which is on BBC Three on Sundays. Kyle – Joe Layton, pictured left, in a vest, unfortunately – got more than he bargained for with his new tribal marking... New Zealand's Alex Tarrant, sans vest, plays Maui. ■



Also on Auntie
Atlantis sadly sinks this spring, with the final six episodes playing out on Saturday nights. Sad face. We're sure it won't be long before the next homo-erotic tea-time fantasy show is commissioned. ■





baby, light our fire

Pop's golden boy is back! We've been wandering a Will-less desert since that distant land known as 2011, but now the journey is finally over. He's back! Will Young's new album, 85% Proof, is out 25 May – we've had a sneak listen and it's epic on a stadium anthem level... We're crossing off the days on our Will calendar. Oh, and Will also has an Instagram account now too – because he's perfect. Did someone say overload of Will? ■

SPEED DATE



Until 19 July
Kick start your spring at the 2015 Udderbelly Festival at London's Southbank Centre. From adult to kid's humour, Mock the Week star Andrew Maxwell leads you through weeks of hysterics, circus and music acts. udderbelly.co.uk ■

22-24 April
Olly Murs is coming to Manchester for three nights as part of his 2015 UK tour. Singing from his new album Never Been Better and backed by an incredible live band, this is a show not to be missed. manchester-arena.com ■

30 April – 3 May
For a caffeine kick, check out London Coffee Festival. More than 250 artisan coffee and food stalls will host tastings, demonstrations, interactive workshops and coffee based cocktails from world class baristas. londoncoffeefestival.com ■

30 April – 4 May
For the first long weekend in May, the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival invites visitors to join and enjoy Scotland's national drink. The festival promises a wide ranging programme of whiskey inspired events. Hic. spiritofspeyside.com ■

27 April – 2 May
Broadway smash The Producers graces the Bristol Hippodrome as part of its new tour. Starring Jason Manford, this hilarious show sees the stars aim to produce the worst show ever. All together now, "Spring tiiiime..." atgtickets.com ■



I'm FREE from CBB captivity and living in a bus full of drag queens as we trek across America. And I wanted to take this opportunity to speak to you all about something close to my heart. Yes, a heart does live among this silicone.

Every night at shows I lose count of the people who come up to me and quote my catchphrase: 'Stop relying on that body...'

Interestingly enough, body issues have had a huge impact on my life, just like many of us. I continue to fight a daily battle to choose the road to health, but it's SO difficult. Trust me, I know.

I have an auto-immune disease that I'm working hard to cure through a vegan gluten-free diet and healthy living, instead of being a victim and sitting idly by feeling like crap. I want to be proactive in my life's journey – and I'd known for a long time that in order to try and manage my symptoms, I had to change my lifestyle. But guess what? I DIDN'T! I knew what I had to do, but making the change required me to focus. Of course I wish I'd done it sooner, but the important thing is that I AM doing it now! The people that listen to my podcast with Ru have been there from the very start of this road, and I thank them for travelling down it with me.

But I have to say this: It makes me SO sad, but mostly angry, when I see people like my CBB buddy Katie Hopkins making fun of people for their size. I agree that it's important to draw attention to health and lifestyle choices. I agree we all need to wage a war on obesity. But WHY would anyone feel that it's OK to go online and berate another human being just because they don't match up to their specific standards? WHY is it OK to name call? To me, it isn't funny. To me, it doesn't get the job done. All it does is call attention to the negative. It sure as HELL doesn't make an obese person want to fight – it makes them want to crawl into a hole and eat. I've been there. It's not effective and it's NOT humane.

We all make choices. I'd LOVE to live in a world where making the healthy choice was easy, but I know that is not everyone's reality. We all struggle for our different reasons to do what we know we 'should' do. Just know this, no matter whether you feel like you are too big, too small, too short or too tall, you ARE loved. Your health is your wealth, my babies. We're all in this together. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, YOU ARE LOVED, YOU ARE WORTH IT AND YOU CAN DO THIS. You have my word. Everything you need to succeed, you possess. Tap into it, let it flow and watch the magic unfold right before your gorgeous eyes. I'm aware of how difficult it is, I'm aware of how many times we fall before we get back up again. But please, NEVER give up on yourself. NEVER forget to love yourself first, even if there's a bit extra to love. It's always worked for me.

Until next time, hit me up on Twitter @michellevisage or at michellevisage.com.

XXX MV. ■

What will you remember?



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The publicly-crowned Voice of an Angel is more of a devilish yelp when GT tells Josh Groban that doing an album of show tunes makes him an honorary gay man. "Excellent!" he exclaims. "Perfect! Is there a trophy that comes with that? My mantel is pretty empty so I could use a trophy or two."

That's hard to believe actually, since the 34-year-old Californian has shifted 25 millions record around the globe, so he must have multi-platinum plaques aplenty, although the guy with the beautiful baritone has yet to grab a Grammy.

We doubt he's upset about that. Topping the US album charts thrice and making the top ten a further three times must be fair compensation, as is getting to duet – live and in person on a Hollywood scoring stage – with Barbra Streisand, which Josh did when he duetted with Babs on the anthemic Somewhere on her Partners album.

"There's nothing like looking to your right and seeing Barbra Streisand and a 100-person orchestra just as it's your turn to hit the high note," he practically coos. "It's daunting and you have to psyche yourself up, but it's great when you get to stand next to a legend like that."

So what is Babs really like? "She's an extraordinarily strong-minded artist," is how Josh diplomatically sings her praises. "She wants what she does to be perfect, she wants it to be great, and her process is amazing to watch because she's old school in her approach to telling the stories in the songs. She's meticulous about every word and every line."

He doesn't see Streisand as a diva, just a perfectionist. And Josh, who performed in shows at school and released his debut album when he was just 20 years old, bursts out laughing when asked if he has any diva demands of his own. "Just tea and water. I try to spend as little time in the dressing room as possible. I don't need a yoga teacher in there."

He can be cranky when he's jet lagged. "There's nothing worse than having just three hours sleep, low blood sugar and having to go out and sing a high note." But what really gets Josh's goat is technical incompetence. "I'm only a diva when it comes to making sure everything is plugged in correctly. If the production or the sound or the mic or whatever means it'll be less of an enjoyable experience for the listener I'll stand my ground. It's very easy to cut corners, with a budget for this or a budget for that, and it's easy to forget the important, simple things."

Everything went swimmingly during the recording of the new album, a collection of musical theatre songs called Stages that covers classics – Over The Rainbow, Empty Chairs at Empty Tables – and curiosities – Pure Imagination from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. "Sometimes you feel it's the right time in your life personally and creatively to take things back to where your first inspiration was," says Josh, who got hooked on musical theatre as a kid. "I grew up in Los Angeles and I was so lucky that there were great theatres there. My parents would take me to see all the Andrew Lloyd Webber shows. We'd go to see Stephen Sondheim. We'd see Broadway concerts at the Hollywood Bowl. I walked out thinking this was an art form I wanted to explore."

The Phantom of the Opera was the first show he saw. "And I became obsessed with the Phantom," he laughs. "I made a papier-mâché mask and wore it everywhere. I wanted to be him so bad." He attended performing arts school and originally planned on being an actor – something he's dabbled in since, popping up in The Office, Glee and Crazy Stupid Love – but that voice was always going to win out.

An album of show tunes brings him full circle, but it's been a while coming. "I wanted to make my own path," Josh explains. "I didn't want to make Broadway albums right away because I had the chance to make new music, and I wanted to take that chance. But I've been able to work with so many extraordinary Broadway performers and immerse myself in that world more and more, so I thought, 'This is a world I've loved for so long and these are songs that feel really innate to my voice – so let's do it.' I feel like it's the right time."

His dream duet would be with Björk, "just for the sheer unexpectedness of it," but for now he's happy with Kelly Clarkson, who joins him on All I Ask of You from Phantom, and Broadway legend Audra McDonald, who lends her pipes to If I Loved You from Carousel.

Missing this time round is Idina Menzel, whom Josh worked with on a concert version of Chess. He's a fan. "She's such a good friend and so funny. I'm so lucky that I get to know all these great singers who turn out to be so funny and down-to-earth. They can make people cry on stage and make them laugh off stage. That's my kind of person."

As is Kat Dennings, the voluptuous supporting star of the Thor movies who puts her comic skills – and incredible cleavage – front and centre in TV's Two Broke Girls. Kat and Josh have been an item since last October and he gets her saucy sass. "I'm the biggest fan of potty humour on the planet," he admits. "When I'm not singing serious stuff on stage I want the dirty joke. The most attractive thing about someone for me is humour and when we first started hanging out she had me in tears. She still does."

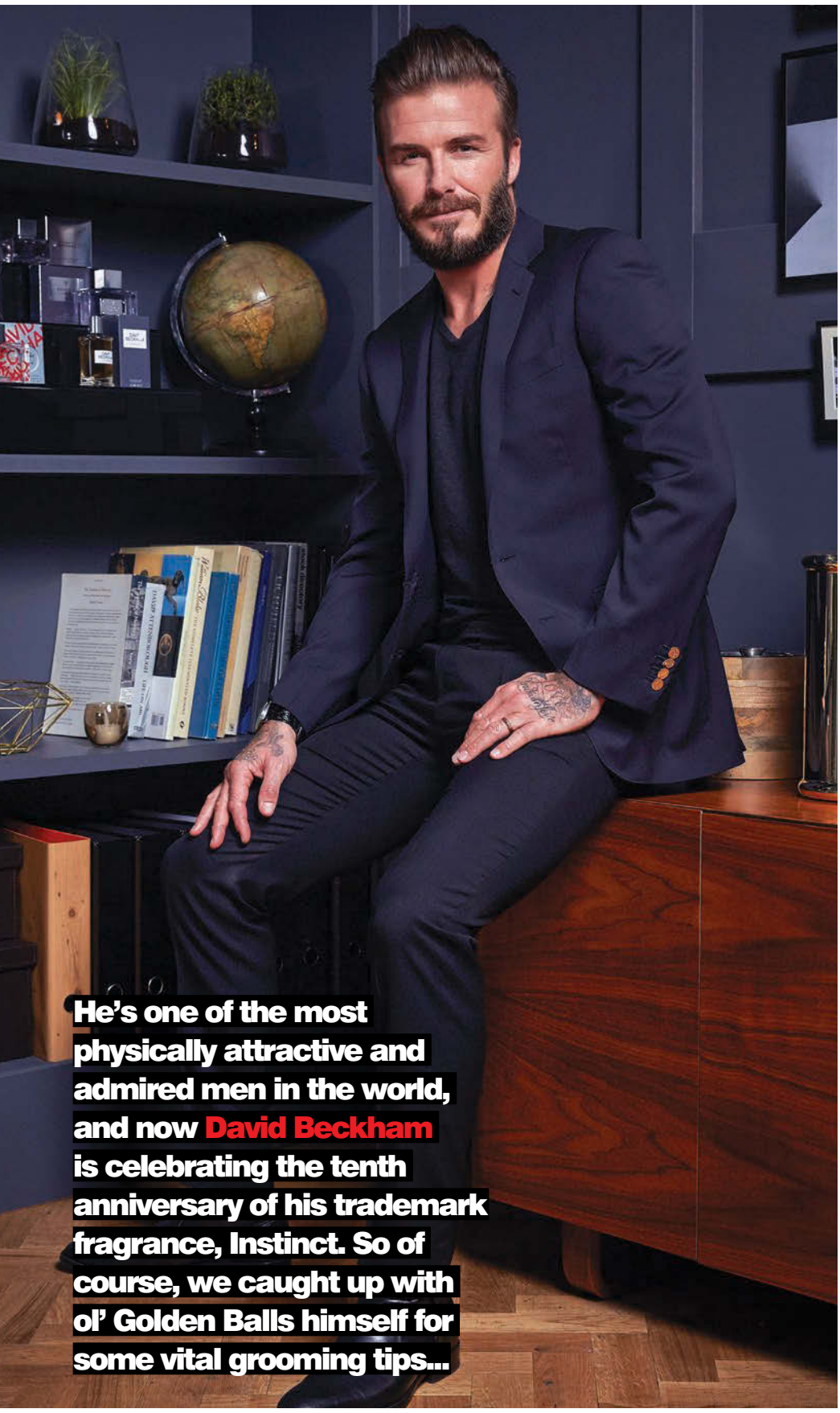
Kat can be truly filthy on the show, which makes us wonder just how angelic the Voice of an Angel himself is on a scale of one to ten? Josh laughs. "I teeter around four or five when I'm not performing. When I sing, I want to do it as purely as possible, and if people in the audience get a little weepy that's a great thing. Then when I'm not on stage, I'm buying the first round of drinks!" ■

Stages is out 20 April, joshgroban.com, @joshgroban



Josh Jarman

WORDS SIMON BUTTON



He's one of the most physically attractive and admired men in the world, and now David Beckham is celebrating the tenth anniversary of his trademark fragrance, Instinct. So of course, we caught up with ol' Golden Balls himself for some vital grooming tips...

On the tenth anniversary of Instinct

"What we've created is something that's special. It's evolved in many ways over the years. I'm almost 40 and I still wear it – and my kids wear it, too. My youngest boy is ten and he loves it. "

On his own personal style choices

"People say I've been part of certain changes throughout the last ten years. It makes me proud that they'd think that, 'cos none of the stuff I do is planned. I'll look back at my hairstyles and think, 'What was I thinking?' But at the time, it was great."

On where he goes for style advice

"Well, Victoria is always a good person to ask because obviously it's her industry now – and she's always been great at decision making. I also get inspiration from my kids. One of the times in the last few months that Brooklyn actually felt like I was cool was when I got him Kanye shoes for his birthday. So for about five hours I was cool, but then he realised that I'd got myself a pair as well and it kind of killed it!"

On his beard

"I'm sticking with the beard. I'm a Taurus, so people keep turning round to me and saying, 'Please shave it off, please shave it. You look terrible.' And it makes me want to keep it even more. Right now, I like it. "

On his tattoos

"I'm really happy with all my tattoos, to be honest. The one that caused the most controversy was the one on my neck because when I had that done, tattoos were out there, but people always saw me like a little bit of a mummy's boy. But every one of them means something to me. When people turn around and say, 'Any advice on having a tattoo?' I go, a, don't go and have one when you're drunk and b, just make sure it's meaningful to you. I'm sure I'll get another one at some point. Sometimes something will happen in my life, with the kids or Victoria, and I'll decide to get one."

On Brooklyn stealing his clothes

"My eldest, I mean, he's 16, but every time I go in to my wardrobe there's clothes on the floor. And I'm a really tidy person, so I know he's been in there. He doesn't think I'm too cool at times, but when he comes out in my jeans or my trainers, I know I'm still a cool dad. Brooklyn is constantly coming out with his own looks, though. My youngest Cruise is the same, and Romeo looks good in almost everything. They give me inspiration all the time." ■



Some people need renovation or retouching, some are pretty perfect apparently, some are in need of a polish and some are just as found.



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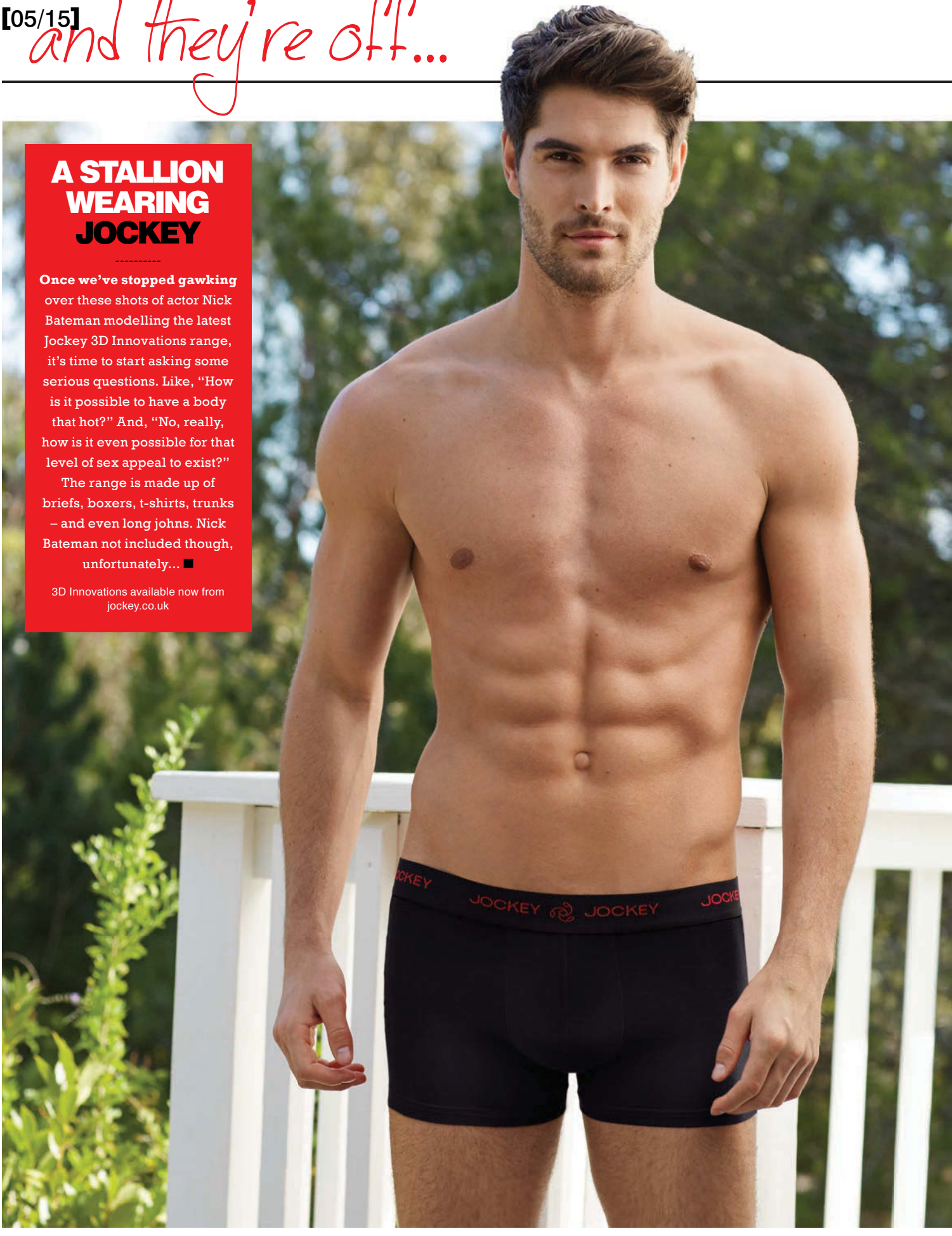
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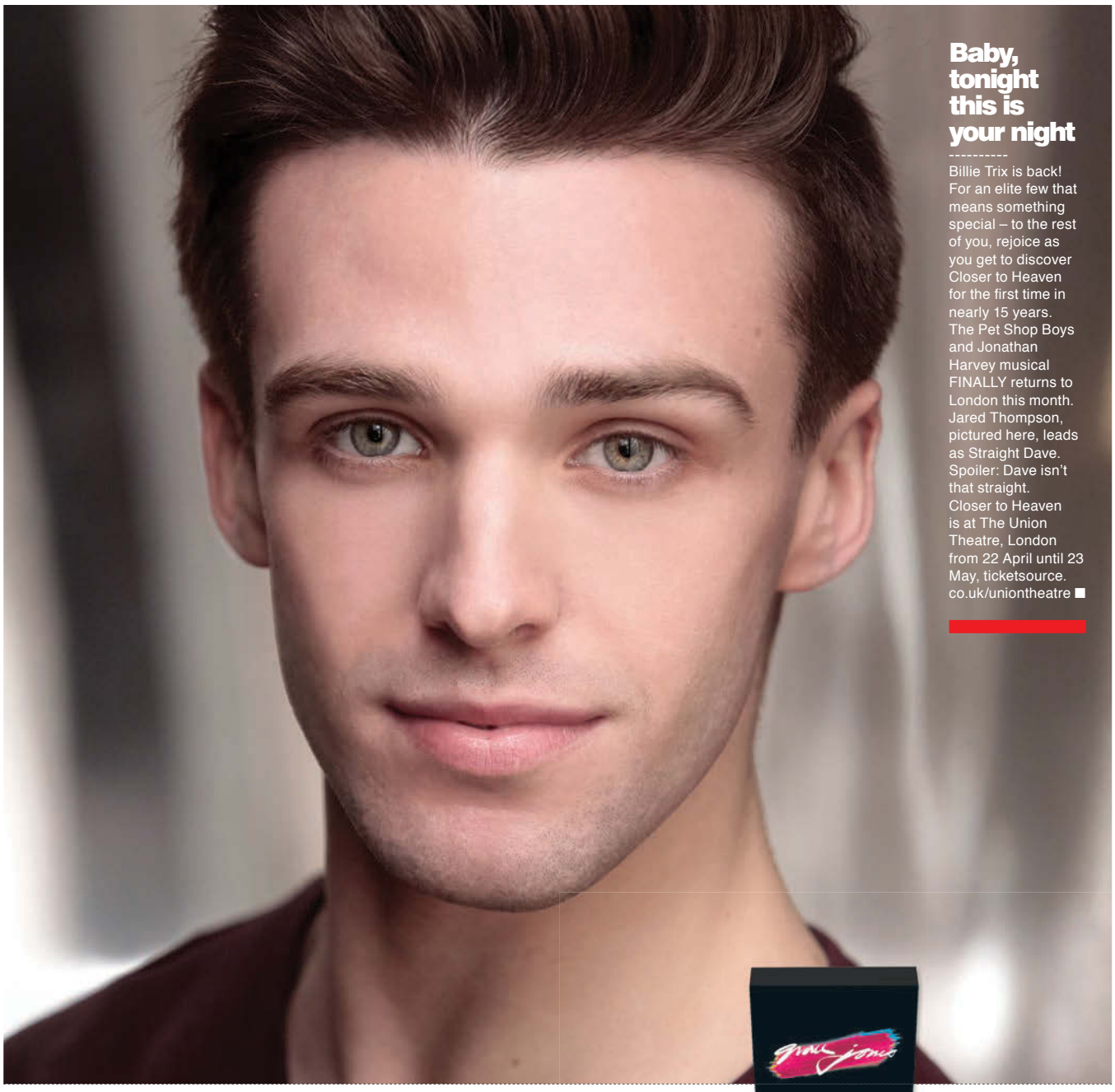
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A STALLION WEARING JOCKEY

Once we've stopped gawking over these shots of actor Nick Bateman modelling the latest Jockey 3D Innovations range, it's time to start asking some serious questions. Like, "How is it possible to have a body that hot?" And, "No, really, how is it even possible for that level of sex appeal to exist?" The range is made up of briefs, boxers, t-shirts, trunks – and even long johns. Nick Bateman not included though, unfortunately... ■

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Baby, tonight this is your night

Billie Trix is back! For an elite few that means something special – to the rest of you, rejoice as you get to discover Closer to Heaven for the first time in nearly 15 years. The Pet Shop Boys and Jonathan Harvey musical FINALLY returns to London this month. Jared Thompson, pictured here, leads as Straight Dave. Spoiler: Dave isn't that straight. Closer to Heaven is at The Union Theatre, London from 22 April until 23 May, ticketsource.co.uk/uniontheatre ■



There but for the Grace of disco Before we went Nightclubbing with Grace Jones, we enjoyed the final days of disco with her first three seminal albums – Portfolio, Fame and Muse. Now, they're all together for the first time, across three discs, remastered with bonus tracks and extended mixes. There's a gorgeous four LP vinyl set, too. Time to jump into that time machine and back to Studio 54 with Mama Jones. ■ DISCO box is out 4 May.

WORDS WILLIAM CONNOLLY IMAGES JOAN MARCUS



Currently finding his inner Barbra Streisand nightly in his one-man show Buyer and Cellar, we talk the relevance of gay stereotypes today with Ugly Betty's very own Michael Urie...

Your role as Marc St James in Ugly Betty was to be replaced weekly, right? Yeah, exactly. The plan was she'd go through assistants like Kleenex [laughs].

When did it all change? The team on Betty liked the dynamic between Vanessa and myself, and we just got on smashingly. I think they really liked what they saw with us from both on set and off. There was this one occasion, I was doing her behind her back and she caught on, and it turned into a moment. We just got on and it was hilarious. And then suddenly, I was being asked to appear in the cast photo.

Was the stereotype of a gay male different then to how it is now? It's interesting this, as I'd say it's the same, but it HAS changed. I mean, it was back in the MySpace days, so when the show first aired we were getting reactions to my character about him being mean and catty and the typical gay guy that worked in fashion – and he totally fit into the stereotype. But yet, he was different.

How do you mean? He worked in fashion but had a heart. He was quite funny yet wanted to help Betty and work with her. The writers told us from the beginning that they wanted to be truthful with him. They knew they'd be watched by virgin teens, but also by kids too. They'd all see two young guys, similar to their ages, who'd hopefully help them accept their sexuality and come out.

Do you think Ugly Betty would have the same impact today as it did back then? Yeah, but there isn't that much on TV that was so new, like Betty was back then. It was a true dramedy at the time.

Is a gay role better played by a gay male than a straight male then? I'm not saying it's wrong for a straight guy to be playing any of these gay roles, but maybe it's better to see a gay guy do it, as well as straight roles too, and have that celebrated. It's tough, but as long as he's with the role and successful, then either can work.

And now you're in the West End in Buyer and Cellar? The show is so fun. I'm Jonathan, who's an actor from LA and totally made up. He's a character that gets hired to work in a basement mall in Barbra Streisand's house. Sounds odd, but she did actually make this place in her home where she kept clothes and even sweet shops, and it looked a little like Disneyland.

So lots of characters? So many – and I play them all! I don't wear a wig or have long fingernails, but I become her [Barbra Streisand] and the other roles. It's totally awesome and hilarious. ■

Read the full interview in full on gaytimes.co.uk. Michael appears in Buyer and Cellar at London's Menier Chocolate Factory until 2 May, menierchocolatefactory.com, @michaelurie

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An LGBT person in the media thanked his dad for helping him remain butch, castable and making sure he didn't turn into one of those 'effeminate' gays.

You know what? I promised myself I wouldn't get sucked into Toveygate, because the last thing anyone needs is yet another bastard giving out yet another point of view on the matter. Bottom line, I'm sure he's a lovely guy. And hey, what I say, or anyone else in the community says for that matter, isn't going to affect him, his life, or his career. Beyond knowing he prefers penis, I've never seen the guy as an advocate for the gay community, and he's clearly never wanted to be, either. But judging by that interview, it's probably for the best.

He may have said some utterly stupid things, but sadly, it's still very much a straight man's world out there, especially out in the USA – and I'm guessing he's trying to stay in it. And work.

Do I even dare to utter the name Luke Evans here, and what happened to his entire gay history once he broke America?

Meanwhile, I've heard just as many people praise Tovey for those remarks, as I've seen ones pointing the witchy finger… I won't count the tens of thousands of absolute fools that constantly tweet support for him, and many others who've served their time in the 'Twitter boo box' in the vain hope that their countless tweets and Facebook messages might just one day be replied to, favourited, or acknowledged.

Those are the cunts that really get on my nerves.

Those, and the countless ignorant arseholes who give 'shock tactic' celebrities a voice, for exactly the same reason.

'OMG Katie Hopkins, thanks for responding, I LOVE YOU, you say what we all are too scared to say!!'

I seem to be rolling my eyes more than the fucking Undertaker these days. But you know what? Fuck it. And fuck them. There are far worse people out there who actually DO hate gay people; whether they're straight acting, fem, masc, top or bottom. They hate us all – and no stupid guise, or label, or pretence will ever make us acceptable to them.

There are far worse people out there who actually DO hate gay people; whether they're straight acting, fem, masc, top or bottom. They hate us all

These people think gays should all be put on an island somewhere and 'blah blah blah.' Yeah, we've all heard a few variations of that line in our lives, haven't we?

We've come so far, but there's still so much hatred about and we need to look out for each other more. I forget how well guarded I am, living in a city where homophobia isn't so threatening.

Then on days like I've had today, I remember how horrible it can be, and how ugly and useless being a victim to homophobia can make you feel.

Today I had to pull two teenage boys away from an older trans lady as they grabbed for her hair. They'd been laughing at her and making rude comments from Oxford Street to Hackney, in peak time, on a crowded bus, and not a single person had stepped up to aid her. As our argument got more heated and I thought I'd have to start fighting two children, we were all asked to leave the bus. They refused to leave, but the lady and I did.

As the bus left the stop, the two boys shouted 'sick fucks' and 'arse rammers' from the windows.

She turned to me and asked if I was alright, then punched me in the arm and laughed: 'Hey, we lived, don't be so fucking upset.'

It made my day to hear her so chirpy about it.

There'll always be those of us who try to conform to what's easier as much as possible. But regardless of what we pretend to be, we can't change what's in our bones. Times are changing. And one sure thing is that the old ways of thinking will die. And we're here; we're more than capable of being our own advocates; by living as we are, proudly and openly. We're a bloody varied bunch, us gays, and I love us. ■

@thatbloodymikey



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Sweetie Darling?

She's the soap bitch that famously killed off half the East End, survived three weeks in the jungle and is now facing thousands across the country as Sandra in Jonathan Harvey's Beautiful Thing. But without a character to hide behind, how will actress Charlie Brooks fare against our sweetie jar of random questions?

WORDS WILLIAM CONNOLLY **IMAGE** JAMES BURTON





What's the best bit of advice anyone has ever given you? If you can't reach something, stand on a box.
Who's your biggest crush? I like a bit of Ryan Gosling. He's hot in The Notebook – with the beard and the hair and everything.
Who's the most famous person that you've ever met? Ant and Dec.
When you go on holiday, what is the one essential thing you have to pack? A book.
A certain Fifty Shades of Grey book, by any chance? I've read one of those and then I couldn't read any more. I mean, they're sexy, you know? But I think one was enough [laughs].
What makes you nervous? Live theatre – it terrifies me! You have to stand up in front of people on stage. It's thrilling and I adore it, but that first night is probably the worst. I'd rather be run over by a bus.
Kylie, Madonna or Gaga? Madonna! I grew up with her. I mean, I did love Kylie as well, but I LOVED The Immaculate Collection.
What's your favourite swear word? [Laughs] I suppose... I mean... I try not to use the 'C' word too much...
Do you use that a lot? Not a lot, but it's effective, isn't it?
Are you in love? Yes.
What's the strangest thing you've ever put in your mouth? Turkey balls.
You're going to have to explain that one... Well, I ate a turkey penis ball and I put it in my mouth and swallowed it. It was revolting. There's video footage of it on YouTube, apparently.
What was your worst subject in school? Probably maths.
Who or what is your guilty pleasure? Million Dollar Listing New York.
What's the most expensive thing that you've ever bought? A sofa that's now sitting in a bloody garage. It's an Italian leather sofa with a back that went up and down. To me it looks like a baseball glove.
Would you rather not eat or speak for 24 hours? Not speak for 24 hours.
What's the last thing that you read about yourself on the internet? That I arrived to the studio in a police car, which I did, when I was doing an interview for This Morning.
If you could go back and give your 15-year-old self one bit of advice, what would it be? Be braver.
What's the first thing that you do when you wake up? Look at my belly in the mirror and give it a little wobble.
How many hours sleep do you need a night to be able to function properly? I sleep a lot. I go to bed about 9pm. So, at least six or seven.
Double denim. Amazing or awful? Instinctively I'd have to say awful, but actually some people can make it look quite good.
What's the hardest word for you to spell? Leicester [laughs]. I can just never remember where the 'C', 'E', 'I' or 'S' goes.
Which supermarket do you shop in? Waitrose, but that's only because it's the nearest one – and it's much more fucking expensive, annoyingly.
Which reality TV show would you like to got on? Strictly.
Are you good at flirting? Very.
What's the longest you've been without showering? Three weeks. Oh! Actually, in the jungle, but we had a waterfall. Uh, yeah, not long. I like to shower.
What do you look for in a guy? Humour.
Sexiest accent? Oh, Irish! I love it!
Is Brad Pitt still hot? I mean, if you like that sort of thing. Yeah. I guess he is. Yeah.
Do you take selfies? Occasionally, yeah.
Can you parallel park? Yes.
Who was the last person to see you naked? My boyfriend.
What song do you sing in the shower? My daughter and I tend to generally sing Les Misérables and Miss Saigon to each other.
Strangest thing anyone has ever said to you? [Laughs] So, a woman once said to me, "Don't take offence to this because she's a fucking dog, but you look a little bit like that Janine off EastEnders." [Laughs] Which was really pleasant. ■

Charlie is currently playing at venues across the country – including Leicester – as part of the UK tour of Beautiful Thing. Tickets are available at beautthing.com, @beautthing



THE GENERAL ELECTION

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DAVID CAMERON
CONSERVATIVE

Who's your gay icon? There are many people I admire from different walks of life – politicians such as Lord Smith and Margot James, journalists like Matthew Parris, sports stars and campaigners like Martina Navratilova or Tom Daley.

If I had to pick jut one, it'd be Clare Balding, who I think is outstanding for her passion and knowledge of the subjects she broadcasts on – and she's also spoken out brilliantly on equality issues.

If I was choosing someone from history it'd be Alan Turing, who clearly was an exceptional man with a brilliant mind. He deserves to be remembered and recognised for his fantastic contribution to the war effort and his legacy to science. His pardon from the Queen was a fitting tribute to an exceptional man.

How should a gay voter feel if their local Conservative candidate didn't vote in favour of same-sex marriage? The key point is that it's now in place – and no one is proposing to repeal it.

I'm tremendously proud that we now have same-sex marriage in this country, and I'm particularly proud that it was a Conservative-led government that introduced it. In fact, I understand I'm the only Conservative Prime Minister in the world who's introduced equal marriage.

While there are people who weren't convinced by the arguments, I'm heartened by the number of people who – both during and after the debate – have said that they changed their minds and are now strong advocates for equal marriage.

If elected, what would your party do to help improve sexual health education in schools for LGBT youths – particularly relating to HIV awareness? Relationship and sexual health education is a matter of great concern to parents and as society changes, as children have greater access to information on the internet, it's an area to be kept under review. We've already added sexually transmitted disease to the Key Stage 4 science curriculum, meaning that students should learn about it as part of their GCSE science. We've also been clear that relationship education in schools should be inclusive of LGBT issues and the government has funded the PSHE association to produce guidance on consent, which has a specific focus on same-sex relationships.

Do you agree with the National AIDS Trust and other charities that PrEP should be made available on the NHS to gay men who need it as soon as possible? I think it's fantastic that over the course of the last 30 years, AIDS has gone from being a very serious and fatal disease to one that can be treated – and is now on the cusp of being one that can be prevented. Too many people have lost loved ones and seen friends and families suffer from AIDS, so it's right that we look very carefully at PrEP. However decisions on individual drug availability are made by the independent National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and not politicians – so it'd be inappropriate of me to prejudge their decision.

When did gay rights become an



Left Cameron with Barack Obama in Washington, January 2015. **Above** With Nick Clegg at the Gay Pride garden party, June 2010.

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER **IMAGES** CROWN COPYRIGHT / ARRON HOARE

integral part of your political agenda? Respect, dignity and fairness have always been at the heart of my politics, so advancing equality was a natural part of what I wanted to achieve.

Which LGBT person would you say has influenced you the most? It would be unfair to single one out, but I've been inspired by all the candidates, many now MPs, in my own party who fought elections as openly gay candidates.

What's your party's most important moment in the history of gay rights? Bringing equal marriage into law – a huge milestone in the history of gay rights in the UK.

According to teacher's union NASUWT, one in four LGBT teachers feel they have to hide their sexuality. How can we change that and create a more accepting environment? It's not acceptable for any teacher to feel they have to hide their sexuality, so the National College for Teaching and Leadership is working with Stonewall to address some of the barriers faced by LGBT teachers and – in particular – their progression to leadership positions. We need schools to be places of respect for both teachers and pupils, and we're making progress – half the number of secondary school teachers now say that pupils are 'often' or 'very often' the victim of homophobic bullying compared to 2009, but there's more to do. So we're investing £2 million in schools to help them tackle homophobic bullying and will keep this momentum up in the next Parliament.

At a time when blood supplies are dwindling and the gay community feels like their blood is deemed to be less worthy, do you foresee the rules changing when it comes to gay and bisexual men donating blood? I'm pleased that we've made some progress on this issue, but I'm aware that it's still a contentious one. Ultimately this is a decision for clinicians, not politicians.

The Albert Kennedy Trust says there are up to 5,000 LGBT youths living on the streets – and that this group is at the highest risk of abuse, violence and sexual exploitation. What would your party do to combat this? There's nothing more important than giving young people security and love when they're growing up. I'm concerned about the specific issue of homelessness among young LGBT people and that's why we've begun funding the Albert Kennedy Trust to tackle it. We must also understand why young people become homeless; one reason some end up on the streets is because they leave school early due to bullying, so we're working to eradicate homophobic bullying in schools.

Which politician do you think has been the most damaging to gay rights – past or present? This is a complex issue that can't be answered with one name. There are leaders and politicians in other countries who have sought to stigmatise the LGBT community which is incredibly damaging. And right now we're seeing truly horrific sights in Syria with ISIS throwing suspected gay men off the top of towers to their death; so right now their leadership is the most damaging and tackling the threat they present is crucial. ■



MIKE FREER
CONSERVATIVE

Thatcher is often heavily criticised for her record on gay rights. But in her old constituency of Finchley and Golders Green, there's now a gay man in occupation. Mike Freer is a big advocate of gay rights – given they're his own – and took full advantage of the new same-sex marriage laws, marrying his long-term partner at the start of the year.

"I've never had a problem in the Conservative Party," he tells GT. "I've never had a problem with my members, never when I was an activist, certainly not when I was leader of Barnet Council. Homophobia exists in all walks of life, but I've never found that the Conservative Party is any more homophobic than any other walk of life. I broadly identified as a Conservative, because I believe governments should get out of the way of who I sleep with or what's behind closed doors.

"Now I accept that different parties have done things. Tony Blair was the one who pushed through the civil partnership legislation, and I'm not sure my party would have done that at the time. But there's been a huge change in the Conservative Party, particularly under David Cameron."

During the last Parliament – since 2010 – the Conservatives have had more out MPs than the other parties combined. At this election, they have the most candidates: A total of 41. How gay is the Tory party? "Oh, please, it's always been gay! They used to say if it wasn't for the gay Tories, central office would never operate! But probably not more gay than Parliament."

Still, the majority of Conservative MPs voted against marriage equality, and it seems unlikely it would have passed without other parties' support. "It's interesting, that. Every party had people who opposed it. I mean, a lot of my colleagues in Parliament didn't know that I was gay. I never went round saying, 'I'm the gay MP!' I just wanted to be a good constituency MP, who happens to be gay.

"Going for breakfast, you'd hear people talking about it, saying they didn't understand why gays wouldn't be happy with civil partnerships. Most of the debate was quite pleasant, there were maybe half a dozen who weren't. I had a major falling out with one of my colleagues over it. We didn't speak, we couldn't bear to be in the same room as one or another for six months. But we've made up now. And then I went to his wedding – a straight wedding."

How should a gay constituent of his friend, who was so against same-sex marriage, feel? "I think you have to think about why. We shouldn't fall into the trap of stereotyping those who voted against as being homophobic. I have a colleague who just didn't believe the state should be involved, full stop. I don't agree, but it's not homophobic of them."

David Cameron has been an ardent and admirable supporter of extending marriage rights. What, then, would be the priorities for a second term in charge? "Some of the challenges that I will be pushing for will be the spousal veto – there's a lot of room to go with trans issues. We've got to embed in the teacher training programme issues of homophobic bullying. In my personal view, we've also got to really unpick our HIV prevention programme and make that work." ■

Same-sex marriage

127
voted for

136
voted against

35
did not vote

41
OUT CANDIDATES

Why vote Conservative, Mike?

[01] The Conservative Party is a modern party that reflects society now. It's the party that delivered same-sex marriage. **[02]** We have more representation of gay people in Parliament than anyone else, which shows how the changes have been embedded in the party. **[03]** You either want a Prime Minister that's competent and delivers a strong economy, or you don't. So there's more money for HIV prevention, more money for tackling homophobic bullying in schools. You need an economy to fund that. ■

WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH



STEVE REED
LABOUR

"I remember as I was growing up, during the 80s, what the Thatcher government did with Section 28, and the demonising of gay men and women. They just seemed to be targeting minorities for what was going wrong in the country," Steve tells GT. "It gave me a very strong mistrust of the Conservatives on issues of personal freedom. And that's still there."

Steve Reed has been Labour's MP for Croydon North since 2012, when he became the first out gay person elected in a by-election. He did so 30 years after Peter Tatchell contested the infamous Bermondsey by-election, considered the most homophobic in British history. Steve was already a Labour party member back then, joining as a teenage boy while he was still in the closet.

It was just days before the vote on same-sex marriage that he took his seat in Parliament.

"It really struck me, on a very personal level, that I had been outside here [Parliament] protesting against Section 28 in the 80s, and had been inside here to vote for equal marriage. We'd completed the equalisation of gay people in law, and that felt personally very profound. It's an extraordinary change to see happen in this country."

Steve's sexuality was hardly mentioned during his election campaign or his time as a London council leader, he says, "other than a former Liberal Democrat councillor who wrote a blog 'exposing' me as living with a man, which wasn't even true – I lived with a cat."

Yet still it remains that numerous MPs who're gay persistently keep the fact secret. Why? "People that are in Parliament and grew up decades ago grew up in a very different culture, and may still be having big internal struggles. I'd choose to judge those people on how they vote on issues of equality.

"But it's still important to be out. We have to normalise being gay – it is normal, of course – but to make that apparent you need people out in all walks of life. People who're in a position of public leadership have a big part to play in doing that."

Thankfully, the times of chronic prejudice have largely passed, as all the out MPs GT has spoken to agree. It's taken cross-party support to bring about that change and all the big three support gay equality. Which is how it should be, of course.

So what are the big challenges that the next Parliament should be tackling? "I think there's still considerable prejudice against trans people, especially around things like birth certificates and access to passports.

"Secondly, Britain still holds great influence in the world. I met a young man from Uganda recently, and he told me of the things he'd experienced there at the hands of bigots, and it was absolutely terrifying. We've just got to do something about that.

"Then there's homophobic bullying in schools. Anyone who is wondering whether or not they're gay at school and hears language that infers gay people are in some way inferior or weaker in any way, they'll internalise that and it'll damage them.

"Finally we do need to go boldly into those areas in our country where these views aren't shared, and challenge those, too." ■

Same-sex marriage

217
voted for

22
voted against

16
did not vote

34
OUT CANDIDATES

Why vote Labour, Steve?

[01] Labour's commitment to equality has been beyond question for decades now. Look at the fact we have full equality in law, that's primarily to do with the Labour Party. **[02]** We need to make sure that the services that affect gay people's lives are all there. I used to lead Lambeth Council and we were one of the first to support gay adoption, helping countless children. **[03]** It's not just about being gay, it's about being part of a society where we all care for each other. If we look out for those who aren't as strong as we are, we'll be better for it. ■



ED MILIBAND
LABOUR

Who's your gay icon? Well, Lord Michael Cashman is somebody who I've got huge admiration for. He's been a pioneer in every sense. He was a pioneer on EastEnders, but he's also been a pioneer in the European Parliament and in the House of Lords. That's why I've appointed him as my global envoy on LGBT rights – because that's a battle that hasn't been won yet. We've got to work in the Commonwealth and Europe and beyond on these issues, because I don't just want to stand up for equality here at home. I want to stand up for equality internationally, too.

How should a gay voter feel if their local Labour candidate didn't vote in favour of same-sex marriage? I think people have to make their own judgements about the candidates that they have. The really important thing to say though is that the vast majority of Labour MPs voted for equal marriage. I'm clear about equality and the importance of equality – and it's Labour votes and Labour MPs that got same-sex marriage through Parliament.

If elected, what would your party do to help improve sexual health education in schools for LGBT youths – particularly relating to HIV awareness? We've said that we'd have compulsory sex and relationship education – that's the right way to go. There's a really broad coalition now right across the board saying we need this in our schools. I think there'll be some people trying to cast up myths about what it'd mean. But as the father of two young boys, I want them to know about friendships and relationships and those things. Obviously, it's got to be age appropriate, but I don't think we have anything to fear from it. In fact, we have everything to gain from it as a society. We've come a long way from Section 28. The wider point I would make is that we've made massive progress on formal equality, but we've still got further to go on REAL equality – whether that's homophobic bullying in schools, or whether that's homophobia in sports... There's a whole range of issues, culturally, where I think we've still got further to go.

Do you agree with the National AIDS Trust and other charities that PrEP should be made available on the NHS to gay men who need it as soon as possible? The recent medical evidence that's come out about PrEP is obviously very positive – it's a positive step forward. And it could make a real difference. There's obviously proper clinical processes that we've got to go through, with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), to look at this. I'm obviously sympathetic, and the evidence is incredibly encouraging, but this has got to be led medically.

When did gay rights become an integral part of your political agenda? It came from growing up in the 80s with Section 28. It was the Thatcher government, wasn't it? If you grew up around that time, it was a deep sense of discrimination and unfairness. I've always been someone that believes in equality, but that was a formative time as far as I'm concerned.

What's your party's most important moment in the history of gay rights?



Left Ed Miliband outside Number 10. **Above** Ed during his bid for Labour leadership, June 2010.

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER IMAGES ISTOCKPHOTO

Equalising the age of consent was the most important moment, for me, because it was a moment which sort of blazed the trail for the principle of equality that we then saw later. It brought with it civil partnerships, and equal marriage and adoption – and a whole range of other issues.

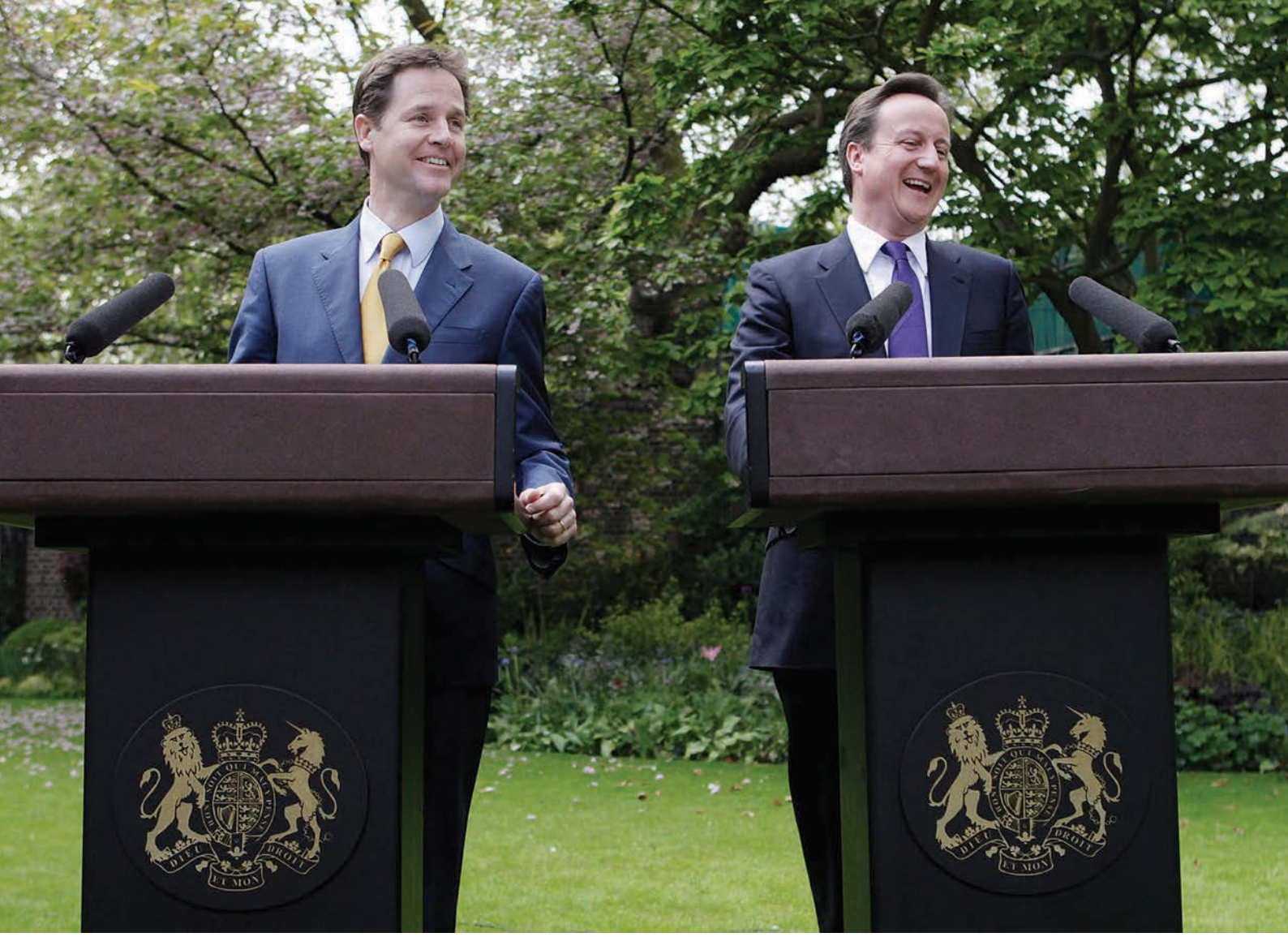
At a time when blood supplies are dwindling and the gay community feels like their blood is deemed to be less worthy, do you foresee the rules changing when it comes to gay and bisexual men donating blood? The guidelines have changed somewhat, but I know that in the LGBT community there's a wish for further change. I think we've got to be led by the clinicians and the medical people that keep it under constant review.

Asides from having a Minister for Equalities, do you think the LGBT community needs a sole representative on the Cabinet? Can one person really represent every minority? I think they can, but I think I'd go even further. I'd say it's actually a role for the Prime Minister to take an interest in these issues. That's partly why I made the appointment I did with Michael as my global envoy, because I wanted to show that when it comes to these international negotiations and international issues, for example, you need the full weight of the Prime Minister behind it.

How do you feel when politicians in your party don't have the same views on gay rights and equality as yourself? I've always tried to lead from the front on this, and my belief in equality is a fundamental principle that we should carry through into everything we do. Sometimes change is controversial, and then after the change happens, even the people who disagreed tend to hold their hands up and say, "Well, actually, that was right thing to do." And that's why the change happens.

We've talked a lot about governments and political parties, but it's not governments or political parties of any stripe that deserve the most credit. It's actually the LGBT community as a movement. Change doesn't happen because politicians make it happen. It happens because the community says, "Enough! We're going to change things!" And nowhere has change been more pronounced than with LGBT rights, and nowhere is it more down to a community than with LGBT rights. It's because of people like Michael Cashman, but also because of people whose names I don't know said, "OK, enough! We're not putting up with this anymore." That's what made the change, and that's what'll make change happen in the future as well.

And finally, why should a gay voter vote for the Labour Party? Simply because of our belief in equality. I came into the Labour party because I care about equality and I care about a more equal society – economically, socially, in terms of power and, as I said, because I don't believe that the battle for equality has truly been won. I don't think we should declare victory. I think we should declare that we've made huge progress – but we've got further to go to win the battle. As Prime Minister, I would be a warrior for equality and social justice, because that's just what I believe. ■



NICK CLEGG
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT

Who's your gay icon? I'd say Lynne Featherstone. I mean, without Lynne I don't think we'd have the equal marriage bill. I remember she came to me and said, "Look, I really want to push this in the Home Office. It's going to be like pushing water up a hill. Will you back me?" I said I'd back her all the way – and I continue to do so. When the history of that particular piece of legislation is written, statues will be erected for Lynne Featherstone on plinths up and down the country. Without her, it just wouldn't have happened.

If elected, what would your party do to help improve sexual health education in schools for LGBT youths – particularly relating to HIV awareness? The thing is, it's not just, "Oh, how can we improve sex education for LGBT folk?" It's across the whole population. We have sex and relationship education guidelines which are outdated – which haven't been updated since something like 2001. The guidelines haven't kept with the digital age. You know, we've got a lot of issues these days which are a huge concern for vulnerable youngsters, in terms of online pressure, bullying, harassment, vilification, victimisation... That's not being reflected in the guidelines. And that's why I pushed Michael Gove when he was in the Department for Education to update the guidelines. And for some odd, idealogical reasons he refused.

The second problem we've got is, PSHE – which is the vehicle by which a lot of this can be discussed in the classroom – isn't actually mandatory at all across the school system. So you've got this ludicrous situation where if you send your daughter to a maintained school, she'll get PSHE taught as a matter of course, but if you sent your son to a neighbouring academy or free school, they won't. Again, I tried to get Gove to see sense on this, but he had a bit of a screw loose when it came to this kind of thing.

Information is empowerment, and empowerment is about protecting yourself and keeping yourself safe. All kids should have access to the same information – because it's very valuable. It's very valuable because it keeps kids safe.

Do you agree with the National AIDS Trust and other charities that PrEP should be made available on the NHS to gay men who need it as soon as possible? The NHS is looking. We've had these studies and tests – like the PROUD Study – which appears to have confirmed the clinical effect of the drug in terms of preventing HIV. But the NHS now, quite rightly, is looking at what this actually means. Would it be clinically prescribed? And to who? And for what periods of time? Is it a one-off prescription or is it an ongoing thing? That's all being looked into at the moment. PrEP sounds like a fantastic medical innovation which can keep people safe from HIV infection, but of course, what we wouldn't want is for people to take it and risk contracting other illnesses and infections because they practice less protected sex. I don't think we should, under any circumstances, regard any drug as a sort of wonder drug that suddenly



Left Nick Clegg's first joint press conference with Cameron, May 2010. **Above** Nick Clegg at the Lib Dem Spring Conference, March 2015.

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER **IMAGES** JAMES GOURLEY / LIBERAL DEMOCRATS / ISTOCKPHOTO

means all risk is removed. But at the end of the day, it's up to the NHS to look at the studies and work things out as they so publicly need to be worked out.

When did gay rights become an integral part of your political agenda? I just think it goes with the territory if you're a liberal. It's not something you pick up like you'd pick up sweets from a sweet shop. The philosophy of liberalism is all around treating people as individuals, without prejudice, and with compassion and tolerance. And then doing your bit in politics to try and help everybody – regardless of their sexuality, their gender, their religion, their world view – so everyone has the kind of equal opportunities to get ahead in life. That's liberalism in a nutshell. It'd be a bit off to be a liberal and not believe in equal opportunities for the LGBT community in this country. It's part of the DNA of what liberalism and being a liberal is all about.

What's your party's most important moment in the history of gay rights? I think it would be the introduction of same-sex marriage, actually. It's probably the most dramatic instalment in a long line of instances where the Liberal Democrats have pioneered and led with LGBT rights – well before and well ahead of other parties. It's going back to Section 28 and adoption rules, and a number of iconic votes that've happened over the past ten, 15, 20 years. But same-sex marriage is probably the most iconic of all.

According to teacher's union NASUWT, one in four LGBT teachers feel they have to hide their sexuality. How can we change that and create a more accepting environment? It's very much about attitudes. The attitudes of their own bosses and head teachers play a massive role. Of all the things I'd hope would encourage any man or woman to be open about their sexuality at school, leadership from head teachers is the most important. At the end of the day, little children shouldn't be wildly interested in the personal lives of their teachers, whether they're gay, straight, married or not. It's not the focus of why they're in the classroom. But equally, it's distressing to think that teachers are hiding their true selves. But the onus lies quite heavily on the shoulders of the head teachers.

The Albert Kennedy Trust says there are up to 5,000 LGBT youths living on the streets – and that this group is at the highest risk of abuse, violence and sexual exploitation. What would you party do to combat this? A couple of my friends, a gay couple, told me about the Albert Kennedy Trust. They do some fantastic work, don't they? And the Department for Communities and Local Government has given some money to the AKT to start a project from the spring of this year – to support the AKT to really reach out to those who're homeless, who can be specially catered for. That's exactly what we need to be doing. A partnership including – if necessary – some money, working hand in glove with the folk at Albert Kennedy. It's probably the best way we can try and identify the scale of the problem and indeed identify solutions to deal with it. ■



STEPHEN WILLIAMS
LIB DEMOCRAT

Stephen has spent ten years as the MP for Bristol West. Back in 2005, his second attempt at running for Parliament, he became the Lib Dem's very first out MP – something he speaks proudly of.

Stephen faced some abuse from voters when the idea of an openly gay person in public life was more alien. "I had people writing some unpleasant letters," he tells GT. "Prejudice is irrational, but some of it was comically absurd. I had one letter, scrawled in the person's own writing, where the guy said: 'I've always voted Liberal Democrat, but then I found out you're a queer… So I'm voting Labour.' It's like, what planet are you on?!

"Then there were people saying I shouldn't be allowed into schools, that I'll burn in hell. That sort of stuff. And everyone seemed to know I was gay because the media constantly referred to the fact. I told them I'm the Liberal Democrat candidate, but it always seemed to be printed that I'm 'the gay candidate.'"

He argues that gay rights is inherent to the Lib Dem outlook on the world: "The clue is in the title. Liberalism stands for people being who they are without too much interference from the state, not having to conform to other people's expectations, feeling free to go about your business without victimisation, prejudice or control over your life. In terms of record, the Liberals were there speaking up for gay rights long before many other people were.

"I think the Conservative Party is still on a journey. Though to give the Prime Minister credit, I think he's been a big part of that. But you've still got to face the fact that – in the vote on equal marriage in 2013 – more than half of their MPs didn't support it."

The same-sex marriage vote was unlike just about any: It was a civil rights issue. Was it not odd to see colleagues, and even friends, debating his very existence in law? "There were some speeches made, in terribly polite language, about how if a man married a man it would be some dreadful change we shouldn't rush into. And I'm pretty thick-skinned, but some of it was quite hurtful. Hearing people elected on the same page as me, standing up in the Chamber and saying that if I love someone, my rights are not the same as their rights. It's saying that a small proportion of the population should be denied certain rights, and therefore in their mind they're saying I'm not as good as them."

About one third of MPs voted against marriage equality. Could he vote for a candidate, even a Lib Dem, who'd been anti-equality? "I personally would probably find it very difficult to vote for a candidate who did not support my human rights. Almost impossible, in fact. It would mean one of their core beliefs is that I'm not equal to them," Stephen says, speaking more frankly than all the MPs we spoke with. "I was very disappointed in some of my colleagues, shall we say. Really disappointed."

As a minister in the coalition, Stephen has been responsible for community cohesion – which includes better representation of gay people. "I find it incredible, for example, that there are still no out gay footballers. I think the role of the government is to offer strong encouragement to the FA that a gay footballer can feel comfortable to come out while they're playing." ■

Same-sex marriage

44
voted for

04
voted against

07
did not vote

34
OUT CANDIDATES

Why vote Lib Dem, Steve?

[01] For a strong liberal voice in government. There are a lot of extreme voices at the moment, like UKIP, and there has to be a voice like ours that speaks up about racism, sexism and homophobia. **[02]** We need to tie up civil partnerships and open them up to straight couples, so anyone can marry or have a civil partnership. **[03]** We make these issues a priority. It would've never seen the light of day under a purely Conservative government. It's thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister and Lynne Featherstone, liberals, that they did. ■

WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH IMAGES DANIEL TIERNEY



NATALIE BENNET
GREEN



Natalie Bennett, 49, originally hails from Australia where she lived for much of her youth – studying in Sydney and coming across gay issues for the first time while playing sports.

"I played a lot of women's cricket," she begins, "and it's true, there were a lot of lesbian women playing cricket. What tended to happen is that women who went off and married men, they tended to do different things on the weekend. Whereas women cricketers would form a relationship with each other so they could both play cricket on the weekend.

"That was my first awareness of these issues. And some of my school teachers who I played cricket with outside school, they weren't out in the school, but that became obvious."

Lesbian cricket opened her eyes, along with two years doing feminist volunteering in Thailand – where she says many gay men confided in her of their fears at pressures to have a traditional family.

She's keen to assert that Britain is home, repeating that she "chose to be British", and considered the introduction of same-sex marriage an important statement about British culture. Though none of her gay friends have married – "They just don't like the idea of marriage" – she commends it as David Cameron's biggest achievement.

But equality in civil partnerships is a much bigger issue for the Green leader. "I've campaigned on this a lot," Natalie asserts, arguing it comes back to her feminism. "I can't imagine marriage, a civil partnership would feel more comfortable for me. But that's not why I campaign on it – it's just an option that should be there for everyone."

Sex and relationship education is also pertinent. Caroline Lucas, the Green's first MP, put forward a bill to Parliament that would have LGBT issues mandatorily included in sex ed. "I think it should start as soon as you start school," she explains, putting the Greens in-line with similar policies of Labour and the Lib Dems.

Her reasons for educating kids "age appropriately" from age four, however, differ. "Kids are going through all sorts of changes, and puberty is happening on average earlier and earlier," Natalie explains, pointing out that these are her own views and are "controversial, by the way." What's causing early pubescence is, apparently, "some of the chemicals we're putting into water," as well as high fat diets and changes in nutrition. "There's a whole lot of stuff!"

Nevertheless, it's party policy to have laws changed to make schools educate everyone about gay issues. They don't believe in a national curriculum, but "every school should have to have a policy on homophobic bullying – if a teacher or supervisor sees something, they need guidelines on how to react."

Bigotry remains a problem in many walks of life. One Green parliamentary candidate, for Cambridge, described trans women as, "a sort of 'opt-in' version of what it is to be a woman." It was surprising, given the Greens have an impressive record on these issues – it's noted they began supporting marriage equality so long ago that they can't even remember. Bennett said at the time that Greens "express our sympathies with anyone who was hurt or offended by [his] remarks."

That's not the only issue she's resolute on. Asked about the relatively high rates of drug use in the gay community, she says: "The war on drugs has failed. We should be treating drugs as a health issue and not a criminal justice issue – that's where the Greens are coming from." And she speaks from experience: "When I was at university I had a few puffs of marijuana, but it wasn't really for me, my lungs felt like sandpaper."

The Greens would overturn the blood ban – abolishing the current situation of a year's abstinence for men who have sex with men – and offer specialist services around HIV prevention and awareness, though they don't have a stance on PrEP.

Not everything can be done by law. Cultural change is important – and nowhere is that more apparent than in sports, with not a single out footballer in Britain. Should England be heading to the Qatar World Cup? "Personally no, that's my personal opinion," she says, "I think there are so many issues around Qatar – gay rights issues, workers' rights issues.

"I think very clearly there's a real cultural problem. That's why athletes so often have come out after they've finished competing. There's a serious responsibility for sport. The evidence suggests it's lagging behind because people aren't coming out. If there's homophobic chants, for example, it should be treated in the same way as racism." ■

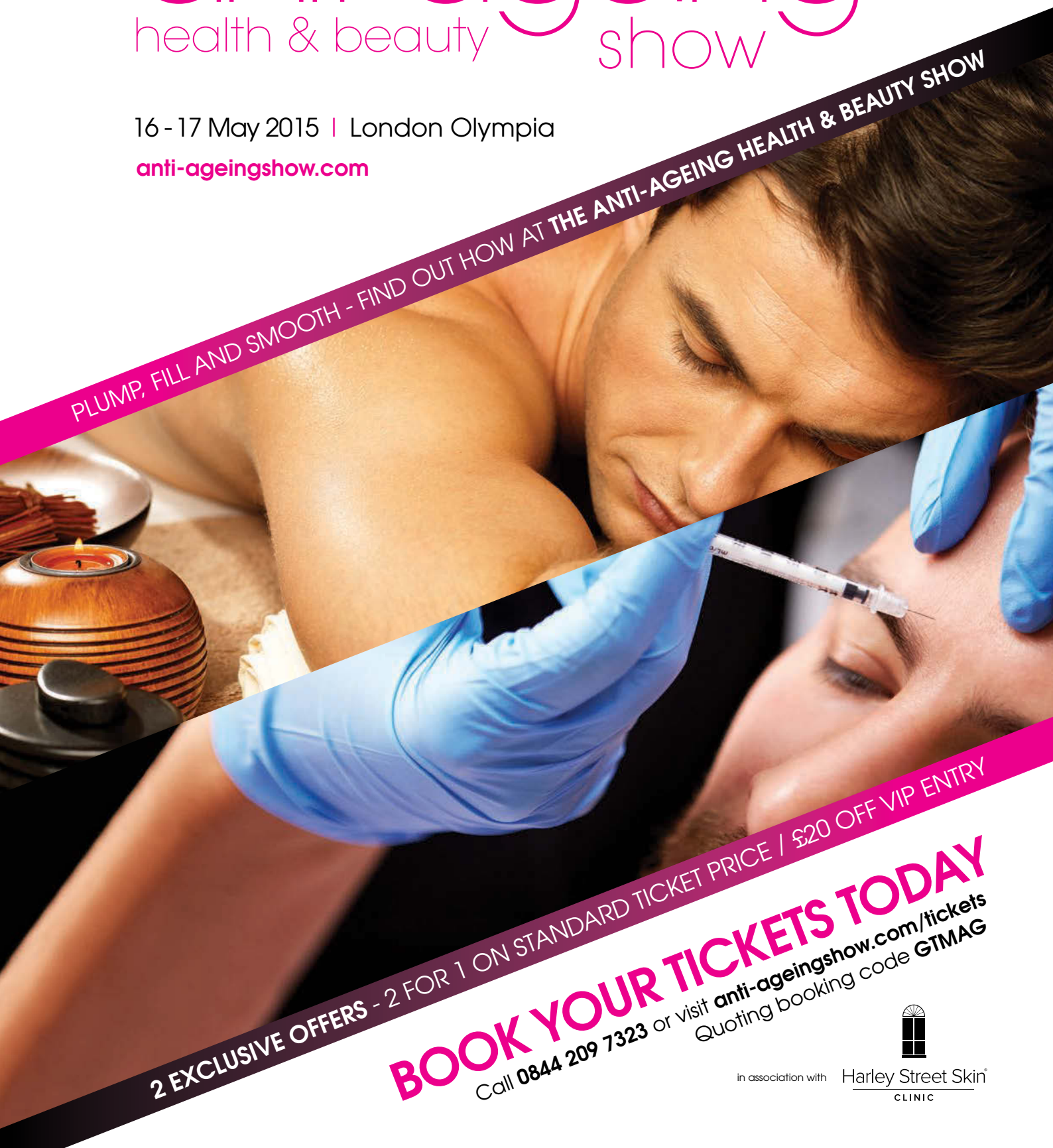
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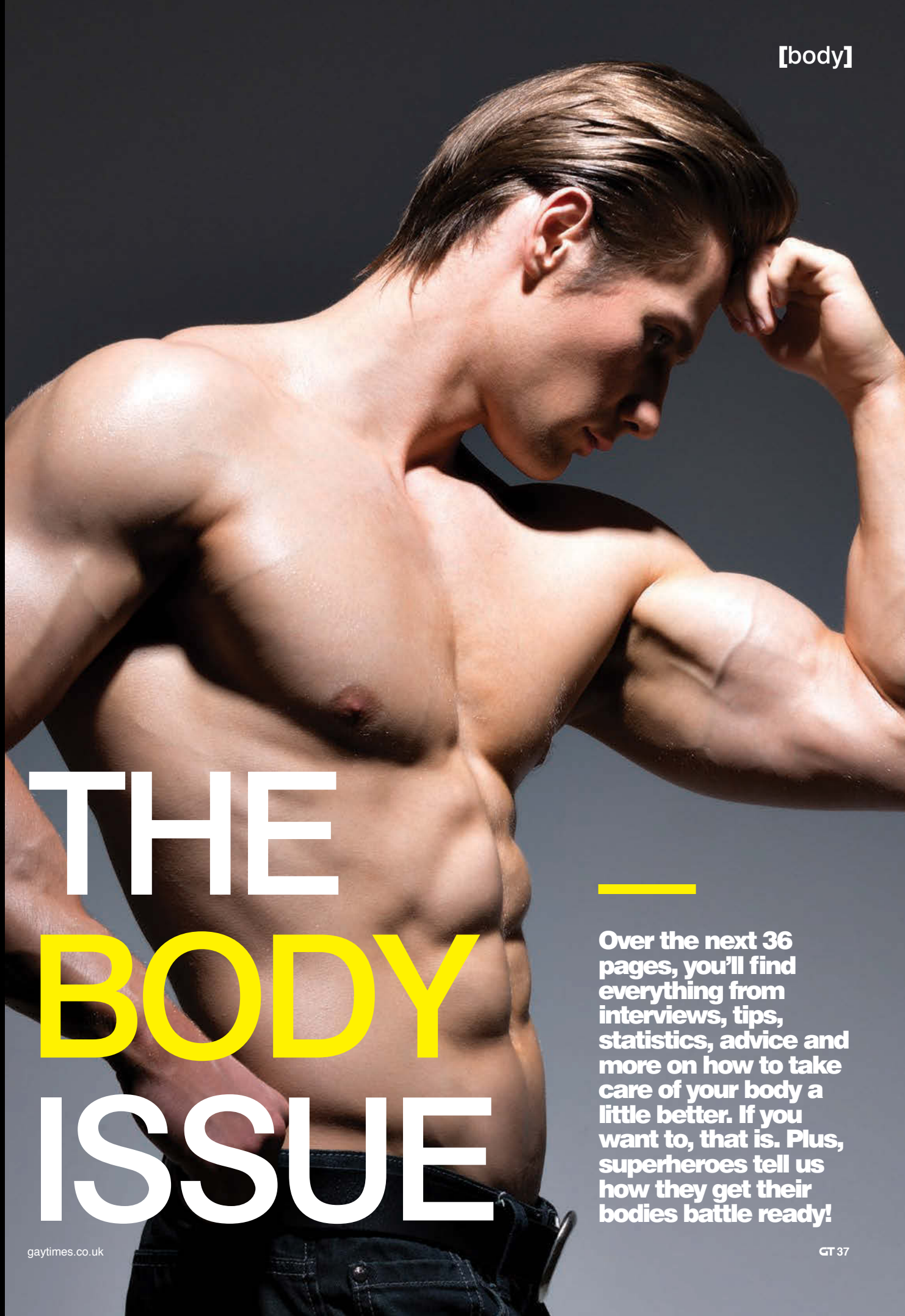


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THE BODY ISSUE

Over the next 36 pages, you'll find everything from interviews, tips, statistics, advice and more on how to take care of your body a little better. If you want to, that is. Plus, superheroes tell us how they get their bodies battle ready!

LEADER OF THE PACK

WORDS DARREN SCOTT **IMAGES** DISNEY



Captain America



Avengers: Age of Ultron



A big kid at heart – that's what we're discovering Chris Evans is. And, it turns out, he's a bit of a geek too.

The man behind Captain America's winged mask has started our conversation by saying how much of a comic book fan he is and, well, you know we love a man who loves his comics…

"I didn't know who Ultron was prior to Joss [Whedon, writer and director] throwing him in the movie…" he says of the big bad in the latest superhero blockbuster, Avengers: Age of Ultron.

"That's so funny!" he says when we reference having first experienced the robotic villain in 1984's Secret Wars series. He adopts a mockingly boasty voice. "I kind of fancy myself a bit of a comic connoisseur, but he was new to me – I'm impressed you knew who he was."

Is it wrong that we're cheering on the bad guy?

"No! Of course not! That's what makes good movies like this. Look how good Tom Hiddleston was. The more you like the bad guy, the more entertaining the movie is. If you don't care about the bad guy at all then there really isn't much conflict to invest in."

It turns out Chris hasn't read Secret Wars, so we're still that little bit geekier. But he's the man in charge, so he wins. Just.

"It sounds silly to say this but it really is growing on me," he says of the role in question. "The first movie, you're so scared and the second one, you're trying to not mess up this amazing group ensemble that's trying to kind of revolutionise the way they do comic book films. By the third time you put the suit on, with Captain America 2, you really start to find your footing and then hit your stride and feel really comfortable. You're very present with it, you're not necessarily worried about the future or trying to analyse the past. You're very much present. And I'm loving it. It's kind of at the point where you're almost sad to see the end coming around the corner in the next couple of years."

The 33-year-old seems surprised when we mention that he's fast on the way to being the actor to play a superhero role the most – with Hugh Jackman currently reigning with seven stints as Wolverine.

"Wow, that's a lot… You sign those big contracts and that was part of my initial apprehension when I first signed up, because they DO have a plan, and the plan involves you to be committed to a role for six movies. And that's just kind of intimidating. But now that it's kind of happened and we've actually crossed the midway point, it almost feels like it's gone by a bit too quick."

On the day Chris and GT speak, the news is full of him visiting, in full costume, sick children in hospital with another Marvel-lous Chris. That would be Chris Pratt, aka Guardians of the Galaxy's Star-Lord. Ever humble, he almost shrugs it off.

"Oh right, yeah, that was a fun trip…"

Does he not think he's opening

the floodgates to lots of gay men putting on fake coughs to try and get a visit from the pair of them in costume?

He laughs hard. "That's really funny actually. It's nice being able to do that stuff, and Chris Pratt's such a good guy – I've really got to give him credit. He was the one behind organising all of it, so I can't take too much of the credit."

See, we told you. Humble.

And that costume is no easy thing… Michelle Pfeiffer used lots of talc in Batman Returns – does the Captain have a similar trick?

"There really is no trick getting into it, it's with the help of multiple people. The problem is just the amount of sweat that's produced. At the end of the day you're peeling that costume off and there's probably… you lose at least five, ten pounds a day. That might be a bit of an over-exaggeration, but it certainly does feel that way. It's a tough thing to do stunt work in. When you start running around and throwing punches and kicks, you really start heating up."

Do we spot a sideline for when Avengers finishes – The Captain America Workout DVD?

Chris laughs. "Yes! That's right!" He adopts an advertising voice. "All you need is a Captain America suit and trust me, you WILL lose weight!"

Does that not pose a problem, given that he needs to maintain a certain size?

"Yeah, that's one of the things I've always said to the higher-ups at Marvel. They have to sympathise with the fact that we're all trying to put on as much muscle as we possibly can, but these suits are so counter-productive. Once you start filming, you're ONLY losing weight. It's so hard to maintain your size, that's why you try and get as big as you possibly can prior to filming, because by the time you finish shooting you're gonna be about ten pounds lighter."

Between shooting, does he slim down?

"Oh, I lose it ALL. I lose every bit of muscle I've gained during the film. The second we've finished filming I don't even think about the gym for months. So I'm actually just getting back into it right now. I started picking up some weights around February. It takes about three months to get back where you need to be. But in the in-between time I avoid the gym like the plague, because, you know, your body can only take so much. My body, naturally, doesn't want to be as big as I try to make it for those films. So you try to give your body a rest. You give your joints a rest, you just let your body recuperate. But now it's time to get back in action."

What's his best tip for getting that body?

"Hmmm… This sounds so meathead-ish but you really have to do bench press and squats. Those two things, your whole body just kind of gets bigger as a result. They're better than any other individual exercise I can think of. Everything just kind of grows…"

But how many, until we can look like that? He laughs. "I wish I could give you some shortcuts, unfortunately there is NO shortcut."

Talking of body, does he not feel that Thor is stealing his shirtless thunder?

"I think Thor steals EVERYONE'S shirtless thunder, he's tough to compete with." He thinks about it and chuckles. "Well, Marvel know what they're doing, what can I say…"

Uh, that they're wrong? Although Star-Lord is now creeping up the popularity stakes with the gay fans – what's the Captain going to do to fight back?

"Oh God, it's a losing battle I suppose. Some you just can't win!" he laughs.

We suggest he's topped the polls before, he can again…





Captain America: Winter Soldier

"Which polls? The shirtless ones? Oh no, am I slipping in the polls? No, you can be honest… Go ahead, give me the truth, have I fallen? Goddammit!"

Well it's Star-Lord's fault.

"Oh, is it? Well I might have to take him out…"

He's previously mentioned Brad Pitt as his man crush – and he's sticking with that.

"Yeah, probably still going to be Brad. He's just in too many of my favourite movies. He's a tough one to beat, too."



He's happy to joke along as we make our obligatory gay references, but we can't not ask about the gay fan base that put him, a straight man, in those polls…

"I guess I don't always compartmentalise it like that, like, 'This is my gay fan base and that's my straight fan base,'" he laughs. "It's just nice to have a fan base, I suppose. So anyone that comes up and has something nice to say, I don't say 'OK, put that one in the gay box,'" he laughs again. "I guess I don't see it that way."

Something else that makes our geekish gay heart flutter – rumours that Spider-Man will join Chris in Civil War… He adopts a very knowing tone. "That's right…"

How does he feel about sharing the screen with the web-slinger?

"I think it's great! I love what Marvel is doing. Marvel is really trying to break rules and tread new territory and just give the fans what they want. It's an exciting possibility and I'm hoping that comes together because I think that would just be a kind of spectacle. I think people would be thrilled to see that crossover happen, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed."

This is the kind of thing that's going to make the internet explode.

"Yeah, exactly, exactly. Well, I mean, even me," he says, suddenly excited. "Just as a fan of comic books, that's something I wanna see too! So I'm honoured to be a part of it."

Who does he think should be the new Spider-Man?

"God, that's a good question. I'd say maybe go young. Make him 16-years-old like he's supposed to be in the comic books. That actually might be kinda cool to give a very youthful feel to the character. Marvel… They don't make bad decisions, they really don't."

Maybe in merchandise, we suggest, having seen his face on underpants… His mother keeps all of the Captain America merchandise – "we're running out of space in our attic…" – and the weirdest thing he's seen his face on is chewing gum, but being an action figure ranks high on his achievements.

"It's great. I kind of wish I could somehow rewind my life and go back to being 11-years-old and kinda pit myself against He-Man in a giant battle to the death in my bedroom. I still, every now and then, might try and slip into my childhood and throw out a few catchphrases while I make my action figure run across the kitchen table. It's fun. It's fun to tap into your youth and kind of see it through a child's eyes."

With rumours that Chris is packing it all in to become a director, we're concerned for the future of our Captain. But fear not…

"I'd venture to say if they'd have me… I think it's almost like high school. You're kind of always looking ahead, about when you'll graduate, but then when graduation day arrives you kind of don't wanna leave. So I wouldn't be surprised if, once we wrap Infinity Wars… I AM gonna try and focus on directing a bit more, but by no means am I done acting. And if they'd have me back, yeah, I'd probably consider it."

So there's a chance we will see that face-off with Star-Lord?

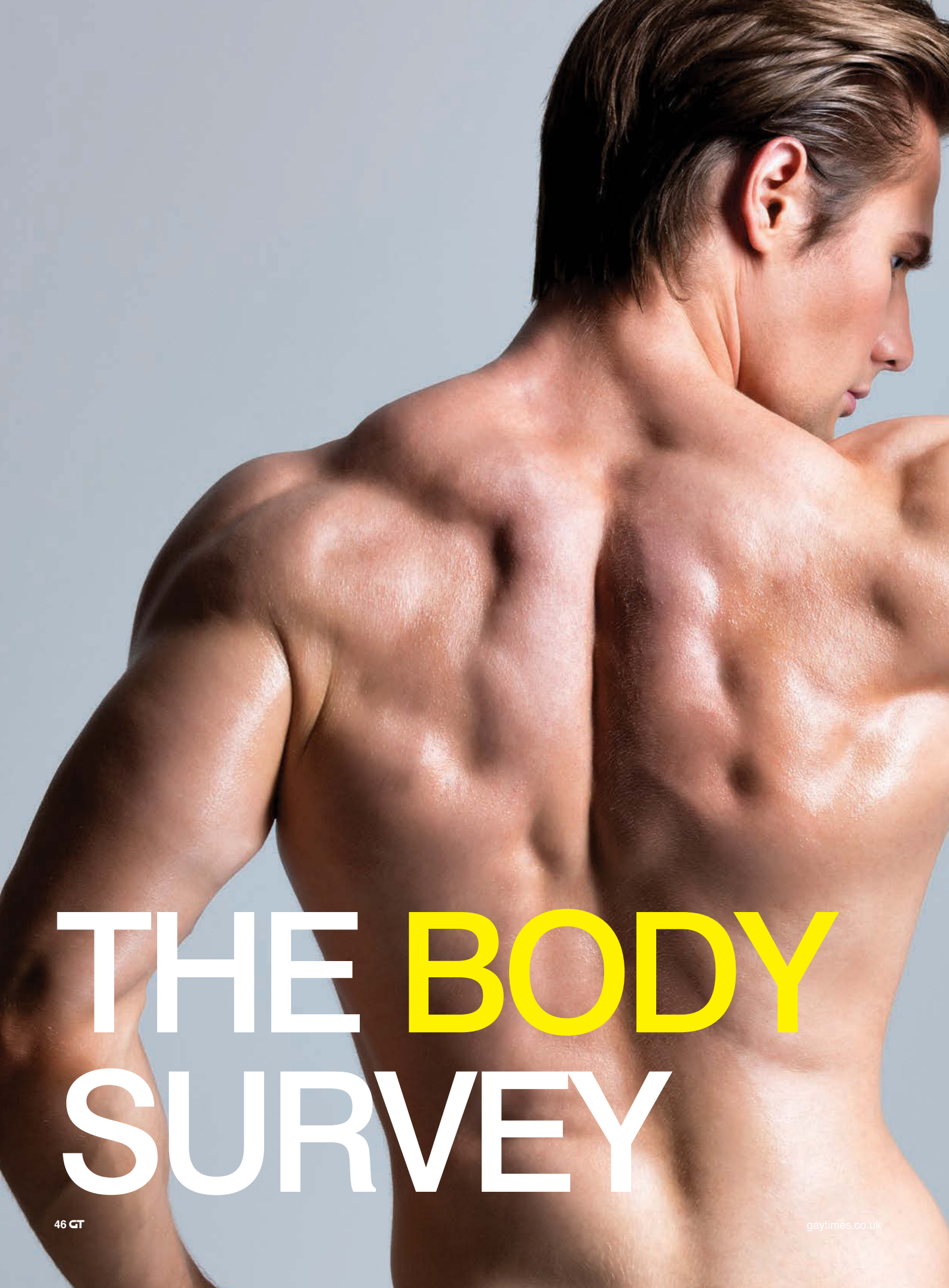
"Wouldn't that be fun?"

But who would win…

"God, that's a tough one. That's a tough one. I'm gonna go with Cap. Gotta go with Cap." ■

Avengers: Age of Ultron is in cinemas now, @chrisevans


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THE BODY SURVEY



IMAGES ISTOCKPHOTO / POSED BY MODEL

We asked 1,000 gay and bisexual men about their bodies. What they'd change, what they love and to what lengths they'd go to get the 'perfect' body – if such a thing even exists, that is. Then we tallied the results and asked the experts so that we can now reveal the naked truth about how gay men really feel about their bodies...

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER

The old adage goes that we only have one body, so we should make it last a lifetime.

And some of us do. Some of us spend so many hours in the gym we practically live there, toning every nook and cranny, spending our heard-earned cash on the latest whey protein infused whatever.

Some of us, if we're being honest, could perhaps look after ourselves a little better. Fewer pints here, fewer takeaways there, and maybe even a morning jog every once in a while.

The point is though, practically all of us are thinking about how we look. According to the results of our survey, anyway, which found that a massive 90% of gay and bisexual men – that's you lot – think about their size and shape quite regularly.

But as you'll see from the next few pages, we're perhaps not thinking too positively. More than half of us say that gay men, in general, have a poor body image. And only a quarter of us are confident with the way that we look.

We want to say now, for the record, that this survey hasn't come about to judge anyone, or make anyone feel bad about the way they look. Our relationship with our bodies is one of the most complicated we'll have in our lifetime, and the only way to make it better is to have a greater understanding of how we – and everyone else – really feels. Hopefully our experts, with their sage advice and analysis, will help squelch any hangups you might have, or help you feel better about any you've had in the past.

But what's important here is to get you lot thinking and talking about yourselves.

So it's time for GT to reveal the facts – like never before – about what gay and bisexual men REALLY think about about their bodies... ■

THE GT BODY SURVEY 2015 MEET OUR BODY EXPERTS



Mark Byron 2014 Big Brother semi-finalist and self-confessed cosmetic surgery addict. He's since had rhinoplasty and liposuction as a result of watching himself on TV.



RDr Anita Sturnham a GP and skincare specialist for more than 12 years, founder of NURISS Skincare and Wellness Clinic and former TV doctor for The Alan Titchmarsh Show.



Chris Jones GT's resident fitness expert, who has a history suffering from body dysmorphic disorder. He shares his fitness advice through his Average Joe-Mo column every issue.

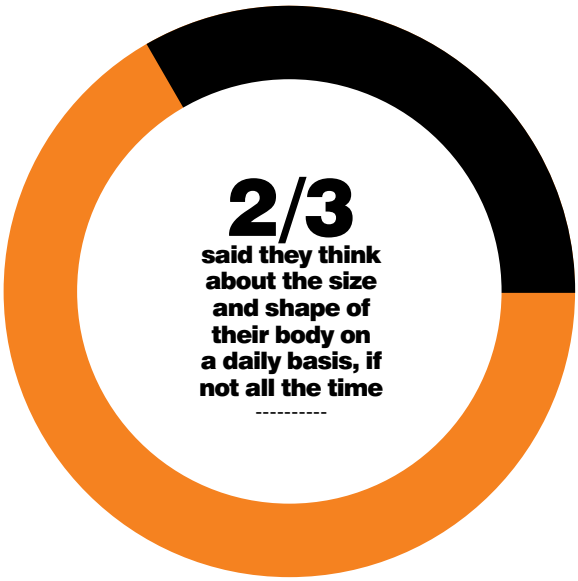


Dr Harpal Bains heads up Harpal Clinic, which combines nutritional and preventive medicine plus lifestyle changes to achieve internal anti-ageing.

16%

the percentage of gay and bisexual men who said they were happy with their body

A half of respondents said they were unhappy with it, while **34%** said it "depended on what mood they were in." Only **1% of people** who responded said they "didn't really care that much."





Dr Anita says "We are all more interested in our appearance than we like to admit. I don't think that this is an indication of vanity, however. I think modern society is very driven by image and beauty and therefore having concern about one's appearance is quite normal and understandable." ■

Only a quarter said that their friends were confident about how they looked



Chris says: "To echo an ever recurring theme here, 'Yes, I think we're all victims of perceiving we have poor body image.' Adverts aimed at gay men expect us all to be big, muscled, toned, thin, tanned and preened to hell – so of course that's helped seed insecurities. Unfortunately, it's something that won't change overnight but you can make small changes to YOURSELF, such as diet and exercise, that can help deal with body image stress." ■

But how would we describe our own bodies?

02% Muscular

08% Toned

14% Slim

07% Skinny

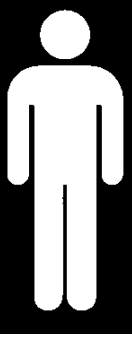
25% Average

29% Bit chubby

13% Fat

02% Obese

Eight people out of 1,000 said they were **"built like a brick shithouse."**



56% – more than half said that, in general, they thought gay men had a "poor body image," and that guys seem to stress out about it too much



Mark says: "It doesn't surprise me that more than half of people asked believe this. I can definitely relate to it as I find that I often compare myself to men I'll never EVER look like. It's important for me and a lot of my friends to strive for perfection, and I do put unrealistic pressures on myself. Unless I looked in impeccable physical condition, I'd feel that my body image was poor. It seems to me that more than half of the gay community also feel this way." ■

And our body isn't something we're keen on talking about with our friends, either, with **47%** saying that if a friend asked if he looked fat, the appropriate response would be to say he looked great, even if it's a lie, while **5%** said they'd rather quickly change the subject



Mark says: "I do feel that, on the whole, a lot of gay men – including me – will compare our selves to our friends and partners. I think 47% is quite a substantial percentage and personally feel the reason behind it is that we can relate to the insecurities. I believe the 5% is for the same reason. Honesty isn't always the best policy when it comes to telling people how they look, it seems!" ■

20%

of us said that our confidence level out of ten, when it came to being topless in public, was ZERO



Mark says: "Again, I believe this comes from comparing ourselves to other gay men. Nobody wants to feel chubby or unattractive sitting on Brighton beach or in Soho Square on a hot summer's day! Luckily this percentage isn't too high. I personally wouldn't take my top off in public. I put a lot of effort into my outfits, so I'd rather people see my amazing shirt than something I'd feel insecure about!" ■



What do we like about our own bodies?

21% Eyes

13% Legs

12% Face

09% Buttocks

06% Hair

04% Chest

03% Teeth

02% Arms

01% Nose

01% Stomach

01% Waist

16% Couldn't even pick a favourite body part!

56%
say that the shape of our bodies stops us from wearing the clothes we want

59%
say that we feel under pressure from adonises in adverts with chiselled abs to look the same

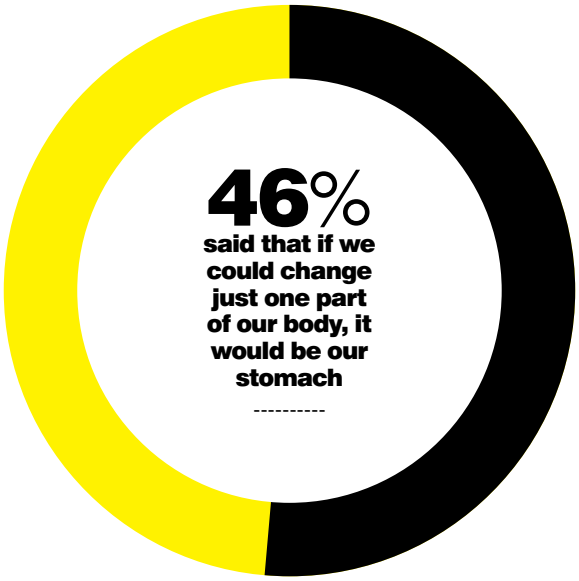
Dr Anita says: "With the increasing popularity of advertising campaigns that employ perfectly honed hunky male celebrities, such as David Beckham, it's no wonder that many men feel under pressure to improve their appearance. I'm sure that the media drives both men and women's insecurities with their appearance." ■

Dr Harpal says: "It's important to keep in mind that these people are paid to look that way – and have the resources to find a way to do it! The rest of us have time constraints, stress in life – which leads to classic 'stress' or 'cortisol' style weight gain in the abdomen and face – plus, we like our socialising and food! If you're living around 70-80% right, you should congratulate yourself. Life is all about balance." ■

2/3s of us said we'd rather be a little bit bigger if it meant that we were in good health, rather than smaller and unhealthy. Cheers to that

Dr Anita says: "Newsflash….Being 'fit' is the new thin! Many of us now realise that the best way of improving our health and wellbeing is to exercise and to eat well. Building lean muscle mass is a great way of keeping our metabolic rates up, improving energy levels and our general health. But muscle weighs more than fat, so as we workout and convert the unhealthy fat to muscle, we'll look more toned, but may weigh heavier on the scales. The weight on the scales is not the important factor here.." ■

Dr Harpal says: "This is quite a healthy attitude as it denotes self-acceptance. But the definition of 'bigger' needs to be redefined. If most of the weight gain is in the abdomen, this could point to various potential problems in the future, like metabolic syndrome, testosterone deficiency and high stress of adrenal fatigue." ■



1/10 the number of gay and bisexual men who've had a surgical or non-invasive procedure to improve their bodies in the past. But what kind of procedures have this group had?

30% botox
23% laser hair removal
17% liposuction
15% dermal fillers
15% rhinoplasty
07% radio frequency skin tightening
07% hair transplant
06% penis enlargement
06% fat freezing
06% abdominoplasty
06% face lift
01% arm lift
01% neck lift
01% blepharoplasty



Mark says: "I've had botox, laser hair removal, liposuction AND rhinoplasty! Cosmetic enhancements are nothing to brag about and I do believe that people shouldn't take them lightly. For me, I was always unconfident about my lack of abs and my nose – so as soon as I had the opportunity to change them, I did. I definitely feel that I'm quite extreme and almost obsessed with my image, which isn't a positive thing. I've had procedures done – lips, botox – that I didn't even need, and I'll surely have done again. Luckily, this is a really low percentage of the gay community and hopefully it stays that way." ■

72% – nearly three quarters of us have considered having either a surgical or non-invasive procedure in the future. But **29%** of those were strict in saying they didn't want to go under the knife

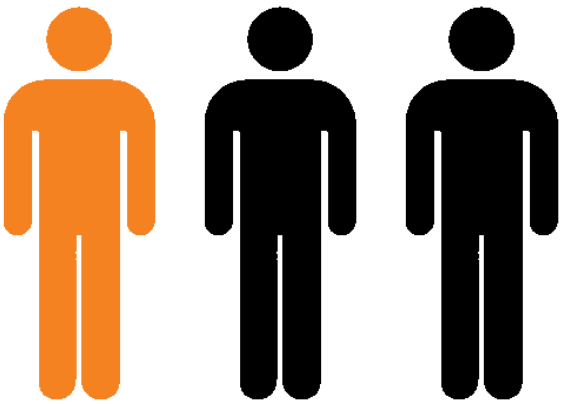


Dr Harpal says: "These days, the need to go under the knife has decreased considerably with fat-busting procedures, like fat freezing, and more traditional but highly effective 'in between' techniques, like Vaser liposuction. Skin rejuvenation procedures range from Ellanse – a collagen stimulating filler – radio frequency to increase collagen, threadlifting and growth factor technology for hair loss. There's something for most people without having to resort to surgery." ■

£5,000

1/5 said they'd be willing to pay up to five grand to get the perfect body

1/10 said money would be no object



On the flip-side, a **third** of us said we'd never be willing to part with any of our money for a cosmetic procedure



Dr Anita says "More than 50,000 cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in the UK last year, according to the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, with liposuction recording a 41% rise. However, with the risks of 'going under the knife' being highlighted regularly in the press, people are also looking more and more for non-surgical alternatives to improve their body image." ■

What potential procedures are we thinking of having?

44% Liposuction

37% Laser hair removal

29% Botox

21% Fat freezing

20% Skin tightening

18% Abdomino plasty

18% Facelift

17% Penis enlargement

16% Rhinoplasty

11% Neck lift

02% Threadlift

25%

have tried taking diet pills. 10% have tried taking LAXATIVES to help lose weight



Dr Anita says: "It seems that every week brings a new diet craze. From low-fat, to low-carb, to food combining, to caveman diets. In my experience, if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is! If these fad diets really worked, then we'd all be on them and we'd stay on them. The reality is that fad diets don't work to help you lose weight in a sustainable way. Doctors and dieticians continue to emphasise the same advice that they've been advocating for years. To lose weight, we need to eat less and exercise more. Simple." ■

29% – the number of gay men who've tried a 'fad diet' to shift some weight.

Common diets tried include Atkins, the 5:2 and dangerous 'crash diets.'



Dr Harpal says: "Most diets have some basis of genuine science in them. The difficulty is to differentiate between the real science and the pseudo-science. It's also important to remember that there's no such thing as 'one size fits all.' One amazing book that analyses how and why different diets work for different people is Living Low Carb by Jonny Bowden. Even if it's not your choice of diet, his method of analysis is worth its weight in gold – and may help towards a lifestyle approach to eating, as opposed to the next fad diet. But if you're ever in doubt, ask yourself what your ancestors ate..." ■

15%

have tried making themselves throw-up after meals

56% – think that men are attracted to all kinds of different body types. But **1/2** of us think that gay men only want guys with 'perfect' bodies.

84%

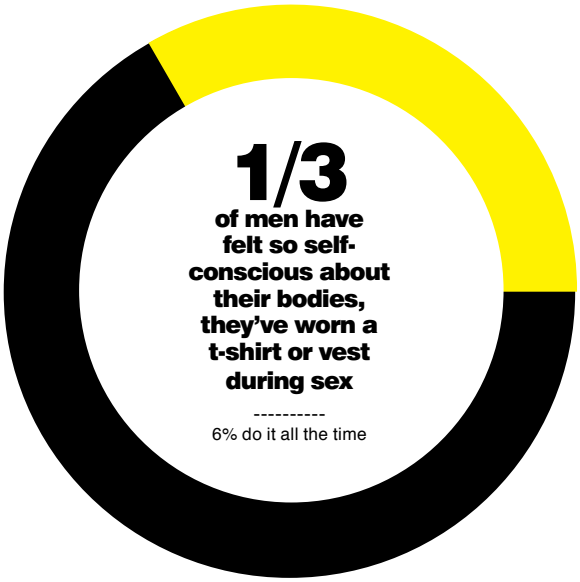
the percentage of gay and bisexual men who said they find six-packs attractive



Mark says: "I can't really relate to either of these things as I'd never actively seek a partner just based on how well their abs show! I think people find six packs attractive as they are a sign of hard work and physical fitness which is a great combination! It's a pity that 50% have this opinion and I believe it comes from insecurity once again, and the belief that you need to have the body of a God to settle down with a partner." ■



Chris says: "I think we just put too much pressure on ourselves and our looks. To be frank and honest, if you're having sex then that person clearly sees something that you're refusing to! Starting a light exercise regime will make you feel confident and yes, more attractive. Releasing endorphins will make you feel positive about whipping off that shirt! Make a start, it can be a slow process but what is stopping you?" ■



Some of us may be members of gyms, but how often do we go?

02% More than once a day, I live there!

18% Daily

49% Two or three times a week

08% Once a week

04% Monthly

11% Rarely

08% I'm a member, but I can't remember the last time I went...

40% are currently members of a gym

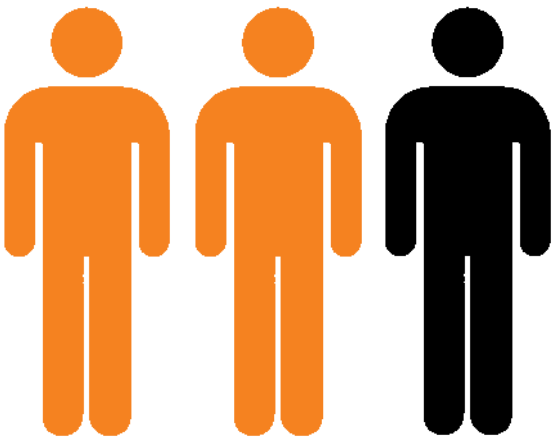


Chris says: "Any visit to the gym is brilliant. It's a positive step in the right direction and the goal is to feel good about yourself and wanting people to notice. Let's be honest, here. Depending on your aims and ideal results, heading to the gym between three and four times a week is a healthy amount for someone who wants to tone up and increase/maintain lean muscle. But according to this statistic, 19% are hardly going and just wasting their money?! If you have that money lying around, then book into a bootcamp or hire a personal trainer instead!" ■

25% – a quarter of us have actually gone as far to cancel a date because we've been unhappy with how we looked. 42% – a large portion of us, 2/5, said that we've been criticised by our boyfriends or even sexual partners about our bodies and how we look. Which isn't the nicest thing to hear from someone we love/lust...

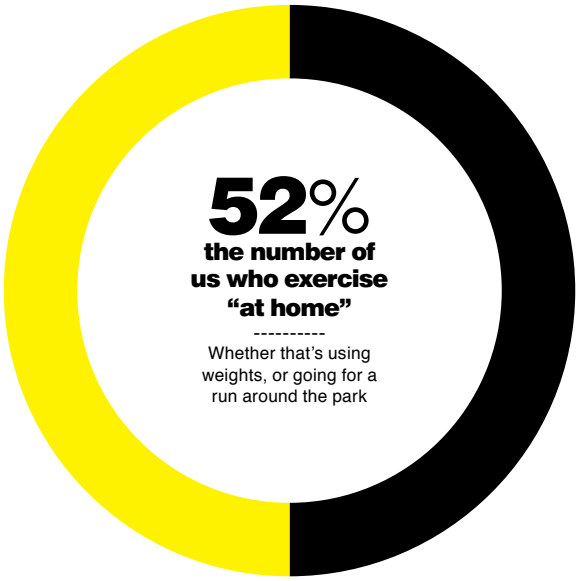


Chris says: "Gah! I mean, it's so easy to blame the media... So I'll blame some other things as well! I grew up watching WWE and reading comic books. 'Oh hello, both are filled with big muscular men.' That lodged into my psyche at an early age – 'This is what I must look like to attract someone.' Like gay men, body dysmorphia comes in all shapes and sizes. We all have it on different levels." ■



2/3 – most of us say we're happy with what we've been given in the trouser department, sticking to the old adage that it's not the size, it's how we use it...

10% tried a penis enhancing product





Chris says: "This is higher than I expected. You can achieve the body you want by working out at home or going for a run. I believe any movement is just simply better than none! If you're careful of your diet and say, do three sets of ten press-ups in the morning – when your testosterone levels are high – you'll start to notice a difference. And in my eyes, that's bare minimum." ■

33 out of 1,000 said they've used steroids to enhance gym performance



Chris says: "I can see WHY men are driven to steroids as they see a need to 'become that big muscle guy, and steroids are the only way.' Yes, steroids are very easy to get hold of these days, despite them being illegal in the UK. If anyone is tempted by them then let me remind you that they're a drug with a short-term shelf life. You don't commit to using them regularly your 'new muscle gains' will fade and you'll have only messed up your natural testosterone levels. Not worth it, boys!" ■

GT Body Survey For more information

You can find help and support for issues involving negative body image, dysmorphic disorder or even reliance on steroids at the following services:

nhs.uk, mind.org.uk, healthexpress.co.uk or contact your local GP.

Dr Anita Sturnham and Dr Harpal Bains will be appearing at The Anti-Ageing Health and Beauty Show at London's Olympia on 16-17 May. GT readers can buy two-for-one tickets by quoting GTMAG at the checkout, or get £10 off a VIP package, anti-ageingshow.com, 0844 2097323.



BIG BUSINESS



IMAGES ISTOCKPHOTO / POSED BY MODEL

Unhappy with what you're packing downstairs? Getting sniggers from size queens? Well help is at hand if you've got £4,000 and some fat to spare. After hair transplants, penis enlargements are fast becoming big business for plastic surgeons. GT examines the lengths some men go to, to pack a punch in their pants

WORDS JOHN MARRS

Only the smug and the self-assured would turn down the offer of an extra couple of inches or a little more girth in their manhood. Even though we're reasonably satisfied with our lot, being the proud owner of a bigger cock is just wishful thinking for some of us.

But for others, witnessing the likes of David Beckham proudly using his God-given (cock and) ball skills to advertise his undies range has made them question whether or not what they have to offer is enough.

And those gay men who've decided they don't measure up are resorting to surgery to produce a plumper penis.

There are three proven penoplasty techniques that will give you those all-important extra inches. Penis girth surgery – or lipofilling – involves injecting fat from another part of your body into your dick. Penis length surgery is the most common technique, and involves cutting the ligament that attaches the penis to the pubic bone and performing a skin graft at the base of the penis for extra length. And for blokes with a bigger belly, liposuction removes fat below the abdomen to make your dick look larger.

Last year, Harley Street plastic surgeon Dr Roberto Viel performed penoplasty on at least five men a week – that's 300 operations in a year for just the one doctor. Extra width will cost you £3,850, while lengthening is about £4,000.

"For most of our clients, they simply feel self-conscious in the gym changing room or when wearing swimming trunks," explains Dr Roberto. "I'd say around 80% of my clients want an increase in both girth and length. The penoplasty can increase flaccid length by one to four inches and the circumference by about the same amount. But we're very realistic about what we can achieve.

"We have seen a huge increase in penoplasty and since the David Beckham H&M campaign began, we've seen mammoth waiting lists in our clinics."

Danny was 42 when he had his first penpolasty with Dr Roberto. He admits that since his schooldays, he has felt insecure getting changed in front of other men. "I knew I was below average and thought having a bigger penis might also be appreciated by my boyfriend," he tells us. "So I saved up the money and had the op, which took just over an hour. I was quite sore for several days, with some bruising around my groin. Then I couldn't stop looking in the mirror! I'd gone from a 3inch flaccid penis to more than 5inch – and the girth almost doubled. I felt completely different and it had a really positive knock-on effect on my confidence. My boyfriend thought I was silly to take risks with surgery, but he admitted he was really impressed and said sex

was better, too. It became more frequent and lasted longer."

While Michael, 30, is confident about his looks, he had his operation because he felt he lacked something downstairs. "It wasn't small but it wasn't big," he explains. "Since having the procedure a year ago, I've met a lovely guy and the sex is more intense than before my op – and much more satisfying. Whether that's because I'm more confident or because the op means the fat in my penis restricts blood flow and intensifies it, I'm not sure.

"I have to go to the clinic every few months to have fat transferred but I don't mind. I think the fat should eventually stay put and I'll be left with a bigger manhood. No one knows I've had the op, not even my boyfriend, but I've put my insecurities to bed."

However, like all operations, penoplasty doesn't come without its complications. "These include infection, bleeding, or blood clotting; however this occurs in less than 1% of patients and drains and heals spontaneously," adds Dr Roberto. "In some cases with enlargement surgery, the shaft may be asymmetrical or lumps may occur due to the position of the fat. But gentle massage should normally resolve this problem.

"Penoplasty is now a well established cosmetic procedure, having been performed for the last ten years. It's safe, effective and, with no foreign material or implants introduced, complications are rare."

But should we stop becoming obsessed with a quick fix solution and tackle the root of penis envy instead? Professor Kevan Wylie, a sexual medicine consultant, says men worried about their cock size should consider talking to a health professional before experimenting with treatments.

"Many men who worry about the size of their penis generally have overall body image issues," he says. "They tend to focus their poor body image on their penis. Often, counselling can make a real difference by building self-esteem, correcting distorted views about body image and learning more about what makes people attractive."

Former British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) president and consultant plastic surgeon Nigel Mercer says penis enlargements are still at the more extreme end of the plastic surgery procedures. "They're not procedures for the occasional plastic surgeon and few would be trained for them in the UK," he explains. "It's not a common request from patients and those requesting it will need careful counselling, and perhaps psychological evaluation.

"Lipofilling may have more effect on a flaccid than an erect penis, it may need to be repeated and all the fat may not even take. Plus, if the fat is injected in the wrong place, it may cause scarring and that may cause the erection to bend.

"Managing the patient's expectations will be the key to their satisfaction with the outcome. I'd suggest that these qualify as extreme procedures and are NOT guaranteed to improve sexual performance or satisfaction. With the risks associated, it's perhaps understandable that the operations aren't mainstream."

But for those who've had the operation, they have no regrets. "Two years on, the girth has reduced but it's still way bigger than before," adds Paul. "I don't regret having it done and I'm only a bit annoyed with myself for not getting it done sooner." ■

Non-surgical alternatives

Tablets and lotions

Makers of tablets and lotions claim they contain vitamins, minerals, herbs and hormones to give you a bigger manhood. But there's no clinical evidence they work and some can be dangerous. America's University of Maryland examined some treatments and discovered they contained traces of lead, pesticides, E coli bacteria and animal faeces.
Chance of success: Zero.

Vacuum pumps

This is where you place a tube over your wee fella and then pump out the air to create a vacuum. The vacuum draws blood into your knob and makes it swell. But if you overuse it, you risk damaging your penis' tissue, making your erections much weaker.
Chance of success: Zero.

Penis extenders

To make your cock larger, these devices involve putting a weight or a small extending frame on your floppy dick to stretch it. Some men using traction devices have seen a 1-2cm growth, but use it incorrectly and you risk causing yourself damage.
Chance of success: Minimal.

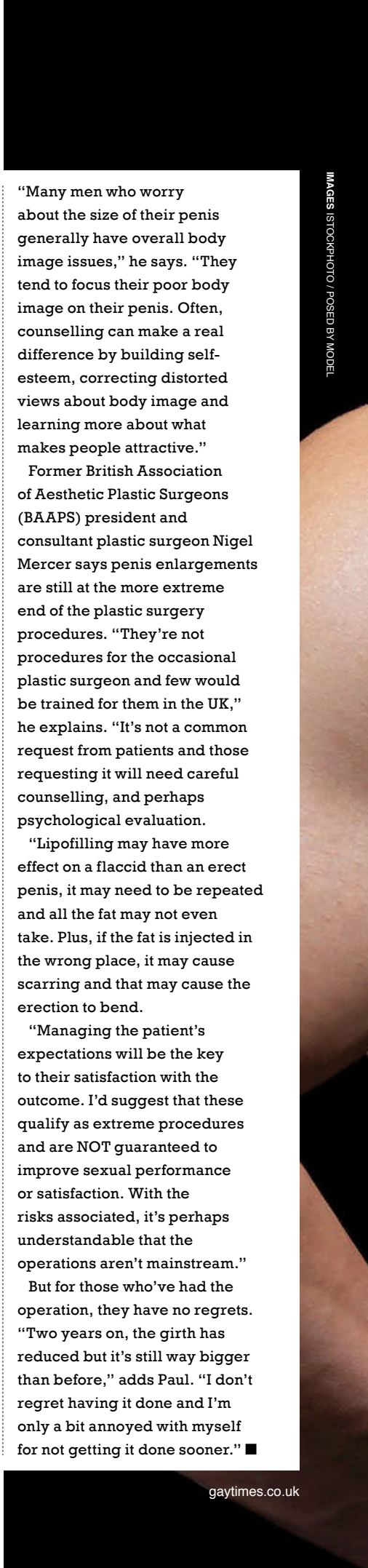
Jelqing

Not to be mistaken with jerking, jelqing is where you repeatedly pull your flaccid dick using your thumb and index finger to increasing the size of your hard-on. The idea is that it'll increase the blood capacity of the penis' erectile tissue, increasing the length and girth. The reality is it makes no difference... But it's fun trying.
Chance of success: Zero. ■

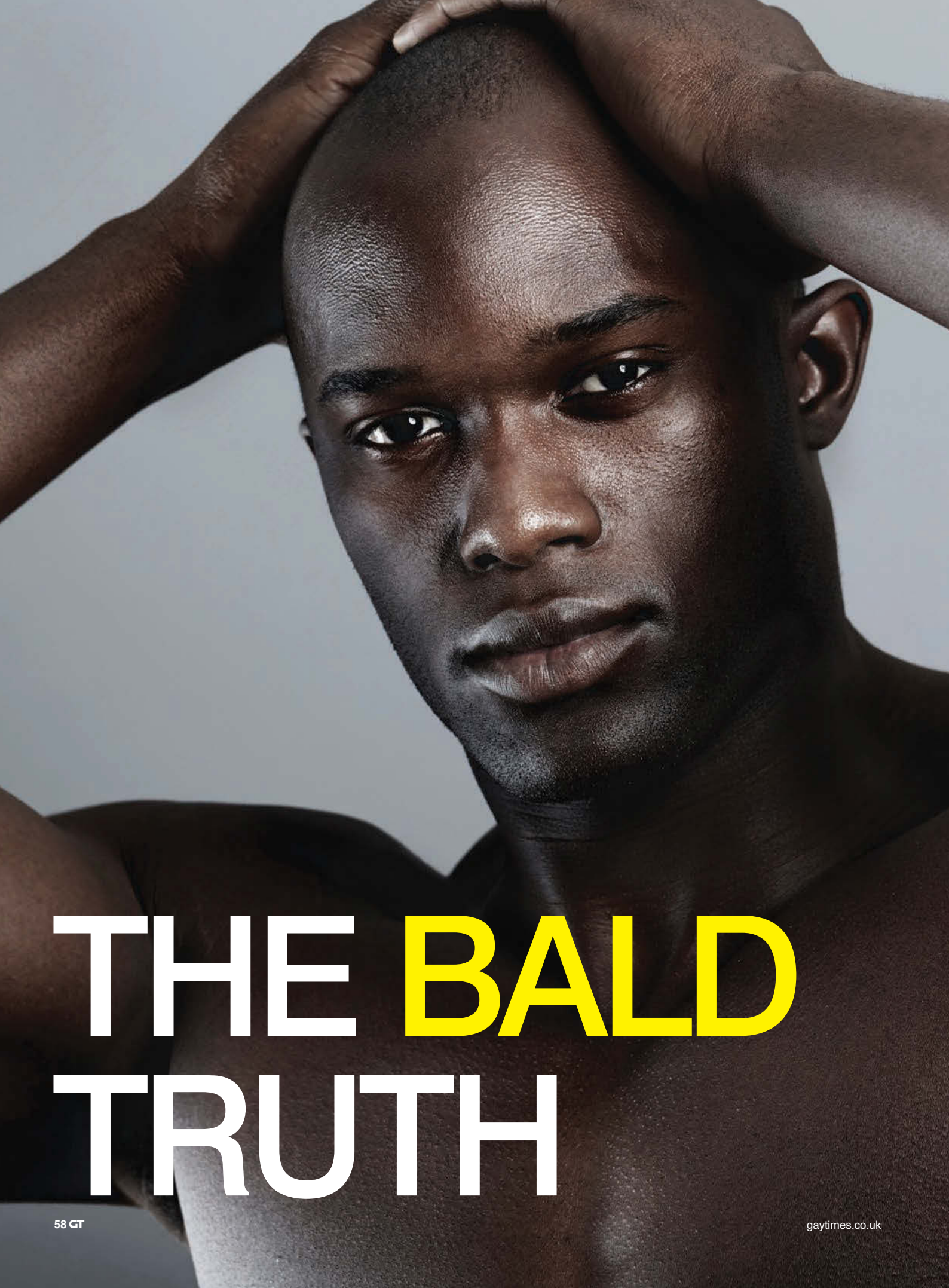
And what if you have trouble keeping the little guy up? Health Express independent medical advisor Dr Hilary Jones explains...

"Is it common? Yes! The majority of men will experience at least a slight form of erectile dysfunction in their lives – from having one too many drinks to feeling fatigued. And persistent ED becomes more common with age. The first thing to do if you feel you have ED is head to your GP. It can be caused by one of a whole spectrum of issues, so clarifying with your GP will leave you feeling confident you're on the best path. Alternatively, you can visit reputable sources like healthexpress.co.uk who can provide advice and treatment solutions. There's usually no cause for worry. As causes can be mental or physical, treatment could be as simple as a chat with your partner or a change in diet. For more persistent cases though, there are always effective medications available." ■

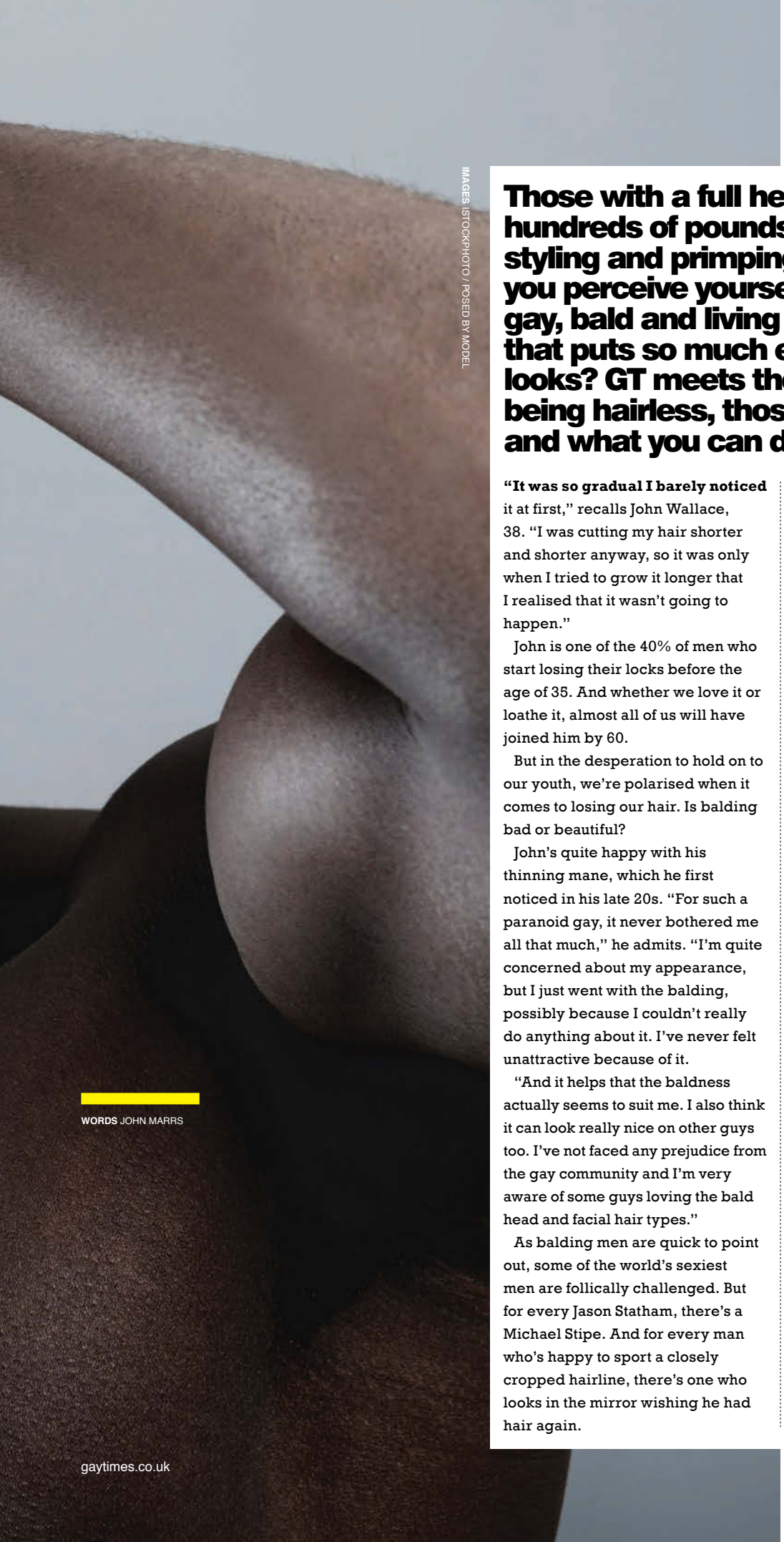
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THE BALD TRUTH



IMAGES ISTOCKPHOTO / POSED BY MODEL

Those with a full head of hair spend hundreds of pounds a year cutting, styling and primping it. But how do you perceive yourself when you're gay, bald and living in a community that puts so much emphasis on looks? GT meets those who hate being hairless, those who embrace it and what you can do to prevent it

WORDS JOHN MARRS

"It was so gradual I barely noticed it at first," recalls John Wallace, 38. "I was cutting my hair shorter and shorter anyway, so it was only when I tried to grow it longer that I realised that it wasn't going to happen."

John is one of the 40% of men who start losing their locks before the age of 35. And whether we love it or loathe it, almost all of us will have joined him by 60.

But in the desperation to hold on to our youth, we're polarised when it comes to losing our hair. Is balding bad or beautiful?

John's quite happy with his thinning mane, which he first noticed in his late 20s. "For such a paranoid gay, it never bothered me all that much," he admits. "I'm quite concerned about my appearance, but I just went with the balding, possibly because I couldn't really do anything about it. I've never felt unattractive because of it.

"And it helps that the baldness actually seems to suit me. I also think it can look really nice on other guys too. I've not faced any prejudice from the gay community and I'm very aware of some guys loving the bald head and facial hair types."

As balding men are quick to point out, some of the world's sexiest men are follically challenged. But for every Jason Statham, there's a Michael Stipe. And for every man who's happy to sport a closely cropped hairline, there's one who looks in the mirror wishing he had hair again.

Jim Ryan, 33, started losing his hair four years ago. But unlike John, he wasn't prepared to embrace it so readily. "I was concerned about it," he admits. "My confidence was quite low anyway after my two-year relationship ended and the fact that my hair was falling out added to feelings of insecurity. I got quite low about it, mainly from a 'will anyone find me attractive anymore?' point of view. It was like the end of the world and for a while it stopped me from chatting to guys.

"When I was younger, I was quite confident and would approach people. Now, unless I had quite a few glasses of wine inside me, I don't think I would ever make the first move on someone."

Jim made several attempts to treat and disguise his baldness, but to no avail. "I kept my hair cut short, so people wouldn't notice that I was losing it," he recalls. "I went through a phase of wearing a baseball cap; I tried caffeine shampoo for a year; a friend suggested I stop eating cheese so I tried that for a month, and the same friend suggested I rub walnut oil into my head. After trying this for a few months – with no effect – I decided he was taking the piss and stopped.

"I'm kind of getting used to it now. Someone once said that I 'have a young face, but old hair,' so I'm hoping my winning smile counteracts the solar panel. But being completely bald scares the crap out of me. If I had the money

How much are you prepared to pay for a full head of hair? Dr Reddy, hair loss specialist at The Private Clinic of Harley Street, gives his opinion on the treatments available

Wigs
£160 to £950
The oldest way to disguise baldness won't cure it, but if it's convincing, it's a quick fix solution. Hairpieces can be styled, permed, tinted, washed and re-groomed.
Time taken: Two weeks to order.
Dr Reddy says: "Quality has improved and some look very natural. However, toupées can slip out of place and thus give the game away. You can't sleep or swim in one and they can also be quite hot and uncomfortable to wear. It's the most expensive option when you factor in the lifetime costs of wearing a wig."

Hair in a can
£17
By spraying your bald bits, products like Restrand and Thickitcoats match each hair to give you added texture and thickness. It lasts until you shampoo it away, but one rainstorm and you're busted.
Time taken: Ten minutes.
Dr Reddy says: "It's a temporary solution that works better on darker hair types. But it can't 'fill in' any areas where there isn't already enough hair for the product to cling too. It's unsuitable for a receding widow's peak or a bald crown."

Regaine
from £17.99
This helps slow the rate of your hair loss and maintains the hair you do have. It can't be relied upon to encourage re-growth though.
Time taken: 16 weeks.
Dr Reddy says: "I'd recommend it to individuals who're at stages one-two of hair loss – with seven being the most advanced. Once your hair loss has developed past this stage, it's unlikely to have any visible impact."

Shampoo and Foam
from £7
There are dozens of thickening shampoos designed to improve hair density. Ingredients are designed to increase follicles and thicken the shafts of existing hair to grow in thicker.
Time taken: Two months.
Dr Reddy says: "Unlikely to have any noticeable difference. If you wear your hair long, you may notice a slight improvement in hair texture after prolonged usage, but a shampoo certainly won't help to delay hair loss or encourage any kind of regrowth. Choose one that's SLS (Sodium Lauryl Sulphate) free. This chemical can slow the rate of hair loss."

Laser Therapy
from £480
Products like iGrow Hair Growth System uses low-level laser therapy technology, red laser and LED light diodes, which stimulate and energise cell activity. Wear it on your head every other day for up to 25 minutes to re-energise unhealthy hair follicles and encourage them to grow.
Time taken: From 16 weeks.
Dr Reddy says:



I'd have a hair transplant without a moment's hesitation."

According to a recent survey, 60% of hair loss sufferers would rather have more hair than money or friends. Almost half would spend their life savings to regain a full head of hair. And a third would give up sex if they could have a flowing mane again.

Matthew Hodson, of gay men's health charity GMFA, says we do feel more pressure to look good than straight men. "The concern about our physical appearance which drives some of us to the gym doesn't necessarily make us happy. Data suggests almost half of gay and bisexual men worry about the way we look and wish we could think about it less.

"For gay men, certainly there's a lot of pressure on the scene, and from other gay men, to look and feel attractive. It's always easy to focus on the things about yourself you don't think are attractive. Personally I think a bald head is quite attractive; it's very masculine, but if that's not the look you want, that can be a blow to your esteem."

Why do we go bald? Here's the science bit. Our hair is made in hair follicles – small pouches just under the skin that last three years before they're shed, then a new hair grows. But it's thought that with male pattern baldness, men's follicles gradually become smaller than normal, so each hair becomes thinner than the last one. It grows for less time before eventually all that's left is a thin stump of hair that doesn't peek out of the skin's surface.

Fifteen years ago, the only affordable disguise for baldness was a hat or a wig. Sir Elton John made a career out of recycling songs and hairpieces. "I don't have a good shaped head to be a bald man," he admitted. "I look like Shrek."

"All that money and he's still got hair like a dinner lady," spat fellow singer Boy George.

But since Elton's heyday, the number of options available has dramatically increased. Now we can pop pills and use food supplements like Nourkrin to support the normal hair growth cycle, or even have a hair transplant. Or there's JÄSÖN's Thin-to-Thick Scalp Elixir which uses natural plant proteins to help strengthen fine, thinning hair and stimulates growth, while preventing future hair loss.

If you have the money, you can take a more drastic and permanent route – like James Nesbitt and Wayne Rooney. Gay Dancing on Ice judge Jason Gardiner went under the scalpel for a £22,000 hair transplant. His operation was even posted on YouTube. "Everybody, from family to my closest friends, said that I looked great without hair," he admitted. "But this hair transplant is not for anybody else, it is purely and simply because of the way I feel about myself. A year down the track, I can't tell you how impressed everyone is, including myself."

Darren Doherty, 38, had a hair transplant in February 2013 at FUE Hair Clinics. Five months later, he could style it like anyone else. "I was 24 when my hair started receding," he explains. "As a gay man, it affected my confidence and I'd get jealous of people with hair who could style it. And being bald made me feel older. I kept thinking about a transplant and – as it became more affordable – I saved up and had it done.

"They shave your hair off and numb the area where they're putting the hair in and where they're taking the graft from. It took the best part of two days to complete – but it's virtually painless.

"Two years later and I'm still looking at it in the mirror – it looks amazing to have a proper hairline again. It wasn't immediate – it grew, then fell out, then grew then fell out again. I was starting to panic but it's normal and you could

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"I haven't seen any convincing evidence that a laser helps to stimulate re-growth."

Scalp micro-pigmentation
£500-£5,000

Your scalp tattooed with tiny dots that look like stubble. There's no invasive surgery and no scarring and while it wont encourage your hair to grow, it'll make it look like you have a buzz cut. Unlike tattoo ink, it also keeps its colour.

Time taken: From two hours.

Dr Reddy says: "This involves colouring the scalp to mimic short hair; the only hairstyle you could achieve is of a 'grade one' shave. The pigment can fade overtime and therefore will require topping up. You should also consider the implications of choosing a specific colour – natural hair loses its pigment and turns grey over time."

Propecia
£40 a month

Propecia is a once-a-day prescription only tablet. It reduces the amount of a hormone in the blood called DHT. Improvement usually continues for two years and in most cases there is a noticeable difference in hair thickness after five years.

Time taken: About three months.

Dr Reddy says: "It slows the hair loss process and I subscribe it regularly to patients. But once you stop taking it, your hair loss will quickly 'catch up' with where it would have got to without you ever taking the drug."

Vitamins
from £3

Vitamin B increases hair growth, while iron helps reduce hair loss. Heart-healthy vitamin E also helps stimulate capillary growth, which allows more blood to flow to your scalp and makes your hair grow faster.

Time taken: One month.

Dr Reddy says: "There isn't sufficient evidence to support the use of vitamins specifically as a hair loss medication."

Healthy diet
from £1

Hair is mainly made of protein so eat a protein-rich diet. Stick to leaner proteins such as fish, chicken, low-fat cheese, eggs, almonds, beans, and yogurt. Vitamin C improves the absorption of iron, so fruits such as oranges, strawberries and lemons help. And get zinc from red meats, poultry, nuts and oysters.

Time taken: One month.

Dr Reddy says: "There are many benefits to a healthy diet, but prevention of hair loss is not really one of them. Some evidence suggests a diet high in protein can make hair and nails stronger. But you won't notice a radical difference to the rate of your hair loss."

Hair Transplant
£8,000-£30,000

This takes individual follicles out of the back and sides of the head which are then grafted onto the area where you're balding. The 'mini' and 'micro' graft technique allows single hairs or a natural group of two or three hairs to be re-planted in the direction of your natural growth pattern.

Time taken: Nine hours, then seven days recovery.

Dr Reddy says: "This is the only option if you want a permanent, natural looking solution to your hair loss. Follicular unit extraction (FUE) procedure provides the most natural looking results without leaving any scarring. This isn't a solution for anyone who is completely bald. You need to have enough 'donor' hair at the back of the head to transplant to receding or thinning areas." ■

theprivateclinic.co.uk



see it constantly growing. I feel like a different person since I've had it done."

Michael Psaltakis, managing director of FUE Hair Clinics, was so impressed with the hair transplant he had years ago, he started his own clinic. He had more than 100 clients in his first year.

"Men don't know how easy and affordable it is, and it can have amazing results," he says. "When you start losing your hair, it's best to get treatment the earlier the better. And we have an equal number of gay men and straight men who come to us."

Some bald men have chosen more alternative measures. When gay French porn star François Segat went bald in his twenties, he took the unusual option of tattooing his head – not to be confused with scalp micropigmentation.

"It was extremely painful for me so we did it in two sessions over ten hours," he recalls. "But it's helped my modelling and porn career. If I was doing porn without this tattoo I wouldn't have this career now – I would lose my personality. But I understand why people look at me strangely."

The two most popular treatments for baldness are Propecia and Regaine. Propecia is taken in tablet form, while Regaine is rubbed into your scalp twice a day. Russell Jones, 27, began taking Propecia 18 months ago when he started losing his hair around the crown. "I was totally freaked out," he admits. "I'm way too young to start looking like my dad so I ordered Propecia from a legit online pharmacy. For about six weeks it didn't seem to work. I kept taking pictures of it with my phone to see if it was making any difference.

"Then after about two and a half months I started feeling more of a downy growth, and after eight months it looked almost back to the way it was. It's a commitment having to save up for the tablets, order them and remember to take them. But they give me more self-confidence so they're worth it."

"We're all going to be affected by our personal appearance," adds Matthew Hodson, of GMFA. "How much we choose to be defined by the way we look though is up to the individual. But if you've got a look that people are going to go crazy in lust after, well you might as well take advantage of it." ■

fuehairclinics.co.uk, gmfa.org.uk



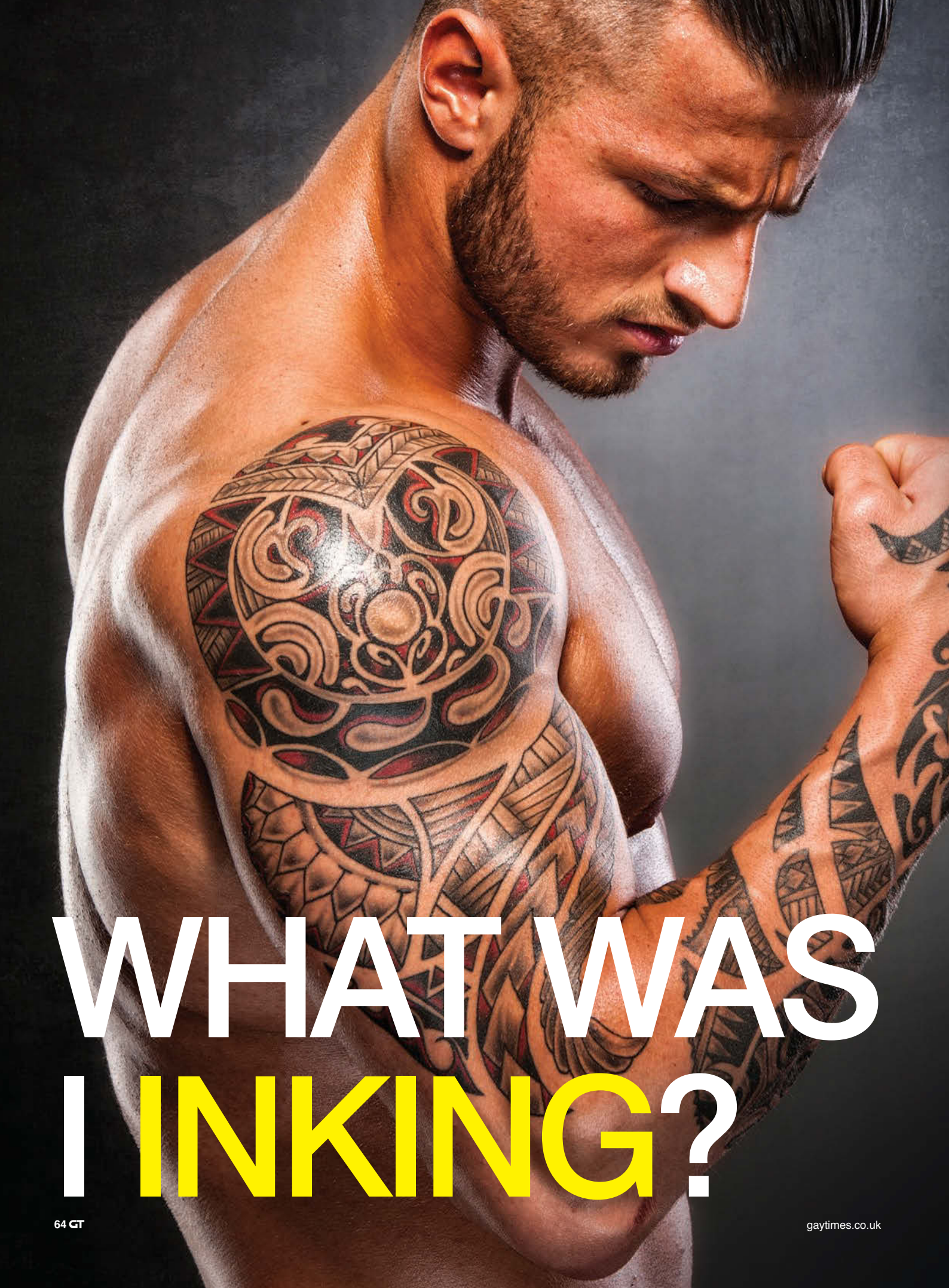
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WHAT WAS I INKING?



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Why exactly do we get tattoos? According to the experts, gay men are particularly drawn to body art for a number of surprising reasons. But with an increasing number of us looking into expensive, painful and often dangerous removal procedures, is it time we stopped to think before we ink?

WORDS EDWARD DYSON

Life long commitments can be hard, painful and filled with regret – and we're not even talking about marrying our potential husbands. No, we're talking about that other life-long commitment. We're talking about tattoos.

But in a day and age when deciding which phone contract to sign with involves an eternity of um-ing and ah-ing, why is permanently inking our skin becoming something of an afterthought?

The word 'tattoo' is consistently one of the most searched words on the web around the world. So much so, Google has stopped including it in their annual top ten. So it comes as little surprise that every year the percentage of people indulging in body art gets significantly higher – with a third of young people now boasting at least one example of permanent body art.

But not everyone is happy with the results.

In fact, polls show that more than a quarter of all people who gets tattoos eventually end up regretting them. And hating tribal tattoos from yesteryear has practically become an industry in itself, as people are making big money from our even bigger mistakes.

Even the NHS came under fire a couple of years back, when it was revealed a whopping £203,499 of tax payers money had been wasted lasering off unwanted tattoos in the UK since 2008. The TaxPayers' Alliance blasted the reports, saying: "Body art is a personal choice. If people have second thoughts they should pay to have it removed themselves."

And these figures only account for the free NHS removals, which involve proving to a psychologist the tattoo is causing you severe distress. The number of people having highly expensive private removals, though difficult to estimate, would certainly be even more shocking.

And it seems us gays have taken to tattooing more than most.

Yes, when it comes to painful body art, gay culture was right there at the beginning, and we're still in the thick of it now.

Just check the tat stats – or tatistics, if you will. Harris' telling study found gay men were twice as likely to get a tattoo than straight men. Could it be that we just naturally gravitate towards a man with big arms looking to cause us some discomfort for a few hours?

Tattoo expert Professor Craig Jackson, head of psychology at Birmingham City University, thinks there's more to it than that.

"There are many reasons gay culture embraced and continues to embrace tattoos," he tells GT. "For one thing it's synonymous with working out, and wanting to enhance a toned physique – another behaviour gay men have always been linked to.

"But initially it was adopted widely by gay culture before it became mainstream. It was often a way of showing you were in the same club,

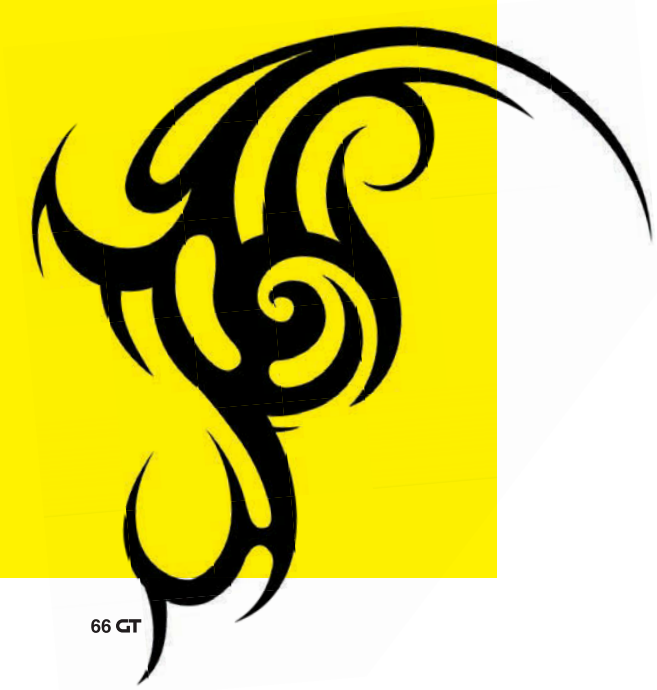
Think before you ink
A bit of pre-tat guidance...

[01]
Will it affect my employability?
If the tattoo you're wanting will potentially be visible to future employers, take into consideration your career path. Are you in an industry where a visible tattoo could hold you back? Do some research. You might be surprised.

[02]
Avoid names
Johnny Depp famously had Winona Forever changed to Wino Forever, after splitting up with Winona Rider. We know how fickle even the most loving relationship can be, and breakups are hard enough without worrying about souvenirs of the skin afterwards.

[03]
Research the removal
If you knew how painful, expensive and not always 100% effective a tattoo removal is, would you still want it? Look up the info on which colours are easiest to remove, it may help you make a future disaster less... disastrous. Not to mention the cost. One session of removal treatment – which could be the first of countless sessions – can cost anywhere up to £300. The price at the end of the procedure of a particularly large tattoo could set you back thousands.

[04]
Counsellors
Self-indulgent? Perhaps, but that doesn't mean it's not worth looking into. Professor Craig says: "Why not speak to a counsellor? You have to live with this forever, there's no harm in talking it over. "And if you looked into where the desire to get a tattoo came from, it might completely change your perspective." ■



and forming a sense of identity, in a time before things were quite as liberal as they are now."

So according to the experts, it started as somewhat of a permanent sexual calling card. And Professor Craig believes the sexual connotations run deeper still, and that master-of-friskiness Freud would have plenty to say on it were he around today.

"Freud would probably say tattooing has sexual links with the gay world," says Jackson. "It's very dominating, being tattooed, and the sexual roles can be mirrored in the process. There's a top, a bottom, it's very intimate and a lot of people find the experience arousing."

So it's sexy. We get that. It's in the league of things that shouldn't be hot but are, along with smoking and grey jogging bottoms. But he also thinks there could be far more depressing links between body ink and us.

"It's almost a form of self-harm in some cases," he says. "Self-harm soaks up negative feelings – and tattoos can too. It hurts, it leaves a mark and causes feelings of pride alongside a permanent commitment to the day it happened.

"And self-harm is another behaviour found more often in the gay community, which can most likely be attributed to feelings of low self-esteem during an often difficult coming out period."

This reason, among others, is why Professor Craig believes that in extreme cases, the need to be tattooed should be recognised as a medical disorder.

"Sometimes I think it should be treated as a compulsive disorder, yes," he says. "I wouldn't say addiction, but it can definitely become unhealthy and dangerous when taken too far."

Similarly one of the UK's leading tattoo artists, Louis Malloy – whose clients include gay pin up and all-round national treasure David Beckham – is also well aware of a darker side to tattoos.

The Manchester based tattooist tells us: "It was really difficult around 1984, when HIV came out and everyone became terrified of catching it.

"It's hard to believe now, but many places refused to tattoo gay men because they were so sure it would spread the disease. I was one of the few people in Manchester who didn't discriminate. I'd grown up around my mum's friends who were gay and I was more educated. To me, people are people."

But even Louis, who lives for body art, admits many enter into it too lightly these days.

"I think there are many reasons more people are getting tattoos and often not thinking about it," he says. "For starters, reality shows like London Ink publicised it. They opened new doors for the industry. And then with the explosion of the internet, and things like Instagram, it just made it so much more accessible.

"Celebrities with tattoos started getting much more coverage in the media as well. And sure, the popularity is better for business, but people are getting them now without thinking – 'Do I really want it?'"

Louis, however, takes his role as a tattoo artist seriously, as he believes everyone should. He even tried to convince his biggest client, Golden Balls himself, not to get his famous neck tattoo.

"I'd advise anyone neck, face or hands – don't do it," he tells us. "I spent two years trying to persuade David [Beckham] to not get the one on his neck, but eventually I gave in. I didn't want him to do it. I said, 'You'll regret it.' But he hasn't had it removed, so he's obviously still happy with it.

"But at the end of the day, it's different for him. He's not going to be lining up at the Jobcentre, is he? So many people think that if they don't like it, oh well, they can

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Tat's the way it is

We speak to a few tat fanatics, who remind us not everyone regrets putting the needle on it

Anthony Tampin
from Dalston, London, works in finance for American football league NFL

He tells us: "I haven't regretted them at all... Although the one on my back now is a bit 'tramp stamp.' It was a tribal tattoo on my lower back that I got about 15 years ago. But what can I say? That was what everyone was getting at the time. I wouldn't get it done now... But wouldn't say I regret it. My current boyfriend actually loves the tribal one more than my other one.
The other one is on my shoulder. It's a Mexican day of the dead skull, surrounded by butterflies and cherry blossom.
My shoulder tattoo was after a bad period in my life – my partner cheating, my grandfather and a friend dying of cancer. It symbolises the fragility of life and a celebration of death... Well, in my head it does! But for me they're permanent. And even if I were to go off them in the future, which I doubt, they symbolise periods of my life, so I wouldn't have them removed.
I've specifically had them in places that I can easily cover if I wanted to. I would love to be able to have them on my forearms and neck, but despite working in media for the last 20 years, I don't think it gives a good impression for someone in finance. My colleagues at work would probably not know that I have any. Well unless they stalked my Facebook pages!" ■

Brad Chalk
owns his own tattoo parlour Funky Tattooist, tailored for gay men, in Bournemouth

He has 12 tattoos – two are sleeves, he has two behind each ear and the rest are randomly around his body. He tells us: "I've never regretted any of my tattoos. They're all personal to me and I love them.
I think they might have had an effect on certain jobs had I gone down a different path, but I was always fine in the jobs I went for. I used to work in a nightclub and obviously there was no problem there, and now I own my own business that's also never going to be an issue.
Nowadays I don't think too many people judge you for your tattoos in daily life, because so many people have them now it's become more normal.
Anyone I meet, without a doubt asks me about it though, so I do end up doing a lot of explaining. But I don't find it boring because I'm really passionate about them. It's what I love." ■

just get it removed. But they don't realise what that in itself entails."

He advises: "First of all it isn't quick. It can take years. And depending on the tattoo, some colours can never be removed and can also leave scars. I've had it – it's painful. A tattoo is like a massage in comparison to the removal of it."

Louis also agrees with Prof Craig that when things go wrong there can be disastrous results.

"There are people who don't know when to stop," he says. "Addiction is the wrong word, but I would say compulsion."

But what negative aftermath can a visibly tattooed individual, who isn't Becks, face in the real working world? Well, it's bad news if you've grown up with lofty ambitions of working at Iceland supermarket.

"A lot of people don't realise the doors that can be closed off for them if they have clearly visible tattoos," Professor Craig says. "A lot of companies have a no tattoo policy. For example, Iceland don't hire staff that have visible tattoos when clothed.

"And the police force in many precincts are banned from having them on show. Many don't think about these consequences, but I'm sure in the coming years we'll see lots of legal cases against employers citing tattoo discrimination."

Jackson himself even admits to being prejudiced.

"We can't help it," he says. "If I had six people before me wanting a job, and one was covered in tattoos, I'd probably subconsciously find a reason not to hire the tattooed applicant. It's unfair, but it's human nature. We expect certain things from certain people."

So are we blindly getting permanently inked without thinking of the obstacles it could bring our way? No issue is ever quite so black and white. Let's not forget, tattoos can be responsible for some of the most creative and beautiful art we see around us on a day-to-day basis. And there are many of us out there who still cherish the tattoo we got 30 years ago.

But just like deciding whether the man you're with is a life long keeper – it's not a decision to be made on a whim. Because if we were faced with a choice between two painful prospects, divorce or laser tattoo removal, we have to admit – there wouldn't be that much in it. ■





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Leaving his lavish life in Downton Abbey to take on the crime-fighting mantle of Daredevil in Hell's Kitchen, Charlie Cox tells GT about buffing up, being better than Ben Affleck and how he's ready for life as a gay pin-up

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

Getting in stunning shape to play Daredevil has been a revelation for Charlie Cox. The actor, who'd never been to a gym and whose idea of weight training was lifting a pint in his home town of London, buffed up for the Marvel TV series and now he's hooked.

"After doing it for eight months I've grown to love it," 32-year-old Charlie tells us. "When you're in the habit of going to the gym you feel great and I've gotten better at it. I used to go 'I wouldn't even know how to sit on that thing or which way to face,' but I've now got a sense of which machines do what, which body part they work, and I've got regimes if I just want to knock out a full-body 45 minute workout. There's less anxiety about it now."

Tucking into a Toblerone and remarking, "I get to eat no fucking Toblerone when I'm doing the show," Cox gives a smile that radiates charm and perfect dental work and adds: "So I keep up exercise now because I really enjoy it. Also, if we DO do a second series, I don't want to have to start from scratch."

Here's hoping Daredevil – which is on Netflix with all the high production values you'd expect from the channel that's brought us Orange is the New Black, Better Call Saul and House of Cards – gets a second series, because the first one is brilliant. It stars Cox, who we've had a soft spot for since he played Tristan Thorn in Stardust, as Matt Murdock aka Daredevil, a lawyer by day who fights crime at night on the dark and dingy streets of New York's Hell's Kitchen.

He also takes his shirt off quite often, a breathtaking sight that the actor only had four weeks to prepare for. "Which, when you've never had a gym membership and never done weight training, isn't an awful lot of time," he grins. "Plus it wasn't about losing weight, it was about gaining weight. I had to bulk up and put ON muscle."

Somewhere en route, Charlie also lost all his chest hair. On sexy display in Boardwalk Empire and poking out of his shirt today, it's nowhere to be seen in Daredevil. "When I had that topless scene in Boardwalk Empire, some people thought I was wearing a sweater," he says.

Superheroes tend to be smooth shaven like Arrow and Thor, who flaunt their six-packs at every opportunity – both on screen and in publicity shots. Charlie reckons: "It's like an advertisement for male strength, isn't it? It's symbolic of masculinity. The images are so iconic and I don't think people associate body hair with superheroes."

Try telling that to bears and cubs, but we see his point. And we agree when he talks about the TV series being completely different, and by implication much better, than the 2003 Ben Affleck movie. "Because we're on Netflix we've been able to come up with a more adult-themed show with some quite gratuitous violence. It's a risk because you don't want to alienate the young kids, because it's Marvel, but at the same time it suits the world of Daredevil."

The actor knew nothing about the superhero, who was created by Stan Lee and Bill Everett in the 1960s. Blinded by radioactivity as a kid, his senses become heightened and he gets into crime fighting to avenge his father's murder, disguising himself in a blood red costume and horned mask. Growing up, Charlie Thomas Cox was into The Beano and The Dandy, not the Marvel Universe. "So it's all completely new to me. In fact, when I got the audition I didn't even know Daredevil was blind. I was completely ignorant, but in some ways it's a blessing because I was able to begin the job with no preconceived ideas. It was only after Comic-Con and images were released and bloggers started weighing in that I began to feel the pressure. I'd become fond of Daredevil and Matt Murdock, and suddenly I realised how wide his appeal was."

The appeal extends, of course, to gay comic book fans. "It's





interesting," Cox says when GT tells him about Marvel's gay fanboys. "With a lot of comic book heroes there's an element of secrecy. Not all of them are, for example, like Captain America – who wears a costume, but he's not in disguise, whereas a lot of them wear a mask. There's a sense of a secret there. All of my gay friends have described growing up with what felt like a secret."

A quick glance at Charlie's filmography – Downton Abbey, the aforementioned Boardwalk Empire, The Theory Of Everything – shows the actor hasn't done full-on action before. He makes up for that with Daredevil and, although he has a stunt double to handle trickier things like turning 900° in the air, he says: "I do as much as I'm allowed to do."

The iconic red suit is there in the title sequence but not in the first few episodes. For a while he's a man in black. "It's like a running top, like Under Armour, skin tight and streamlined," is how Cox describes his initial costume – and he isn't at liberty to tell us when and how it'll switch to red.

"I'm not allowed to say," he sighs. "All I can say is that it'll be revealed in the first season." So he'll eventually shift things up a gear from Lycra to leather? "It's not leather," he laughs, towing the party line about not revealing any details. "What's really great is that, within the world of the show, with the material used to construct the superhero costume, there's a lot of discussion about it. It's a very cool storyline actually. Often in the movies they don't have time for that because they have to fit so much into two hours, whereas over 13 hours of television there's more time to explore all the elements to being a superhero."

We push for more details. "Well, there's a lot of discussion about why Daredevil should have a costume. What does it symbolize? What does it look like? How practical should it be? What is its functionality? I find all the stuff that surrounds the donning of the suit fascinating and I hope the fans will feel the same way."

Our heads are spinning as to just how Daredevil will fit into the Netflix strand of the Marvel Universe, what with Jessica Jones, Luke Cage and Iron Fist getting their own shows before they all come together as The Defenders. Charlie insists he has no idea how it'll all pan out either, or if indeed Daredevil will get a second series. "They haven't told me anything. They reserve the right to make that decision at any point, but my great hope is that there'll be a second series."

As for The Defenders, he reckons: "It seems to me that there's an attempt to keep the characters relatively autonomous, so you meet them in their own worlds, then you meet them together. When I was a kid, when you thought about being a superhero or having a superpower, the exciting thing was the idea of being able to do something no one else could do. So it's nice to have a show where, although we acknowledge the existence of other characters, Daredevil is special."

There's that grin again. "But of course, as the Marvel Universe is famous for, there are Easter eggs and things are all intertwined – and hopefully the fans will relish that." In the first episode, for example, there's a scene that references the fact Hell's Kitchen is now ripe for development because a bunch of superheroes destroyed it in a big fight – which obviously alludes to the spectacular battle at the end of the first Avengers movie.

For the record, if the man playing Daredevil could have any superpower it'd be the ability to fly. He's a bit embarrassed that it might be the obvious choice, but he's hard-pressed to think of a better one. "I mean, invisibility would be cool but the problem with that is the mind goes immediately to lesser instincts. You don't think about using it to help people, you imagine being in places where you could see things you shouldn't."

Like, perhaps, Scarlett Johansson slipping in or out of her Black Widow costume. That's the Marvel character Charlie would most like to see pop up on Daredevil, alongside a certain web-slinger. "I read a lovely issue of the comics where Matt Murdock is assigned to represent Daredevil in court, which of course is a physical impossibility. Daredevil turns up, Matt Murdock represents him and you're like 'How the hell is this happening?' which dispels anyone's suspicions that they're the same person. It turns out Peter Parker put the suit on as a favour, so it'd be cool if Andrew Garfield popped up on the show sometime."

Unlikely, since Garfield has been dropped from the franchise – something that Charlie is genuinely shocked to hear. "Really? I really liked Andrew in that role. He's a fantastic actor, as is Tobey Maguire."

Likewise Mr Cox, who like Andrew and Tobey before him has buffed himself up for superhero-dom. Is he braced for being a gay pin-up too? He beams. "Why not? I'll take being a pin-up full-stop."

And he's no stranger to gay roles, having done The Lover/ The Collection on stage – "Well, technically the character was bisexual, but I thought of him as gay" – and snogging Rob James-Collier in the first ever episode of Downton Abbey, when his lusty Duke of Crowborough got it on with Rob's frisky footman.

"The one line in everything I've ever done that friends quote back to me is when in that scene Rob says to me, 'I thought you loved me,' and I say, 'I do love you but one swallow doesn't make a summer.'" He bursts out laughing. "They never let me forget that one." ■

Series one of Marvel's Daredevil is on Netflix from 10 April, @daredevil



IMAGES MIKE MASSARO

long live the king

"Oh, I'm gay." There, that's it. Since no one else has come right out and asked him, that's how Olly Alexander from chart topping, award-winning electropop band du jour Years and Years describes his sexuality. The cute 26-year-old popstar, who happens to be gay, also happens to talk about it exclusively for the very first time with GT



Let us briefly set the scene. Olly is in a hotel room, while Mikey from the band is getting his haircut and Emre is in the shower. And the elephant in the room that we're acknowledging is Olly's sexuality. "I feel like it's quite nice – nice is maybe the wrong word – but if people are interested, I'd think it's totally fine to ask that question," he tells us.

"I've never meant to hide away or lie about that, but people appear afraid to ask it sometimes. And I think if there were more of us having a discussion about it, it'd be less of a thing. I suppose it's fine, because you can let the music do the talking, it's more of an intimate personal vibe whatever anyone takes from the music, I guess…"

Well, here's the thing. They ended label mate Ellie Goulding's reign at number one with their last single King and, like many of their songs, there's a lyrical fixation with being used and abused. As the chorus goes, "I was a King under your control, I wanna feel like you've let me go." Olly laughs at our observation.

"Sadomasochistic. Yeah, I know what you mean. Most of what I've been writing about on this album has been about a handful of relationships. The way I externalised them through lyrics, I felt like they were slightly manipulative and I was always falling for the wrong person."

We've all been there. It's what makes Years and Years go above and beyond the usual cute electropop band. He goes on.

"I got stuck in feeling this chaotic narrative of being used, which was the story I was trying to get out in song writing. But I also feel like maybe I'm drawn to the hysteria of love. You know? That kind of thing when something's bad for you but it feels really good? That's a juxtaposition that I've always been interested in – I'm not the only one! Lots of people are the same. But I've been really touched by how people seem to resonate with the lyrics."

He goes on to cite one of his biggest inspirations, Neil Tennant of Pet Shop Boys and the whole Crying at the Discoteque genre.

"I think if you can have a dance beat but a heartbreak lyric, that's going to stay with you forever. Robyn is a great example. All the big pop songs, all the great classics are like that. I'm just licking the boots of all those great people."

And here's where we get a bit personal. As someone who came of age in – let's say the 90s – there simply weren't any visible, happy, gay role models around. You had to go to literature to find gay couples – and most of those were wracked with guilt, struggling through the AIDS epidemic, or ended up killing themselves. So it makes sense to us that as an openly gay songwriter, you might be drawn to what Olly calls 'chaotic narratives.'

"I'd probably agree with you in terms of not having a lot of obviously content role models in our culture of gay men," he says. "There's no difference in the actualities of loving someone, obviously it's the same for everyone. I think it maybe came from being a bit of a lonely teenager, feeling like a misfit at school and certain people can identify with that. We have a long way to go with role models as well. It'd be nice to have a young, happy gay couple in the media. I don't really think there's much of a difference, we're all hurting in the same way."

A second elephant just entered the room. We ask Olly if he's in a relationship.

"I am, yes."

So, Olly. You could be that happy gay couple in the media…

"I could, couldn't I? I was just saying that. I could have one, that could be it. Yeah."

He doesn't offer any more, so we

leave it at that. It's hard enough being the new gay face of pop without having to have a new relationship splashed all over the tabloids.

"I'm only one third of Years and Years," he continues, "I'm one gay third, but the other two aren't and… I did think about if that sort of thing would be a problem, but I actually just don't think it is. Because the others, Mike and Emre, couldn't care less about what sexuality I am, and I've enough faith in people that they won't give too much of a shit either about what sexuality everyone is. That's just my attitude and I feel like if I believe that, I can materialise it, and it'll be great," he chuckles in his charmingly shy but assured manner.

Things have changed since our day. Kids don't buy into tribal identities based around music or sexuality in the same way. As Olly points out, the Y&Y fan base listens to Stromae, Arctic Monkeys, Kanye and Marina and the Diamonds in one playlist. Everything is more fluid, as Olly has seen for himself.

"I was reading something about one girl on Instagram saying she was pansexual. She's 16. I didn't even know what pansexual meant when I was 16, I had to look it up. You're attracted to everyone regardless of gender identities, and I was like, 'Wow, you don't even see gender?!' That's amazing. I have faith in the younger generation."

As a band, they're certainly down with the kids. Since winning the BBC Sound of 2015 they've made friends with the majority of the list and – along with the likes of Sam Smith and Clean Bandit – are leading the charge of a UK pop renaissance. In their own right, Years and Years have put in the hours, self-funding videos and releasing an entire album's worth of singles and tracks – their genius cover of Blu Cantrell's Breathe is more than worth a spin. With so much material out there, what surprises can their debut album Communion bring?

"I don't think people will be shocked, because the stuff that they'll have heard is very much indicative of our sound. Having said that, we get really bored doing the same thing twice, so I feel like on each track on the album we've tried to reference something new. And I think we've done that with our singles – Take Shelter is a bit dancehall/bashment, Desire is more house, King is a bit more synthpop, maybe a bit 80s – and we like to do that. Some tracks are more RnB, some are a bit more Massive Attack-y, ones a bit disco, some songs are a bit more slow and acoustic."

Woah there nelly. A Years and Years disco track?

"Erm, well, ha – that's to be decided yet. I don't know if it'll go on the album or on the deluxe, I don't want to say unless it jinxes it…" And suddenly we can't wait to get our mitts on their debut Communion all over again. We chew the cud about what a Years and Years first album will be like, and those lyrics come back up again. His bandmates give him most of the reigns for the whole thing.

"They let me do it all. Sometimes they'll be like, 'Oooh, that's a bit too sentimental, a bit too soppy that line,' and I'll change it. Unless I really like it. There's maybe one song on the album that's a slightly more positive love song, because I met someone and falling in love I was all, 'I want to write a love song!' It's obviously still laced with fear and desperation and being crushed. I wrote this slightly positive lyric and they were like, 'Oh no, this is just not going to work for us.' But I kept it in anyway."

Never mind Olly being loved up, we're more than a little smitten with them. ■

Communion is released on 22 June, yearsandyearsofficial.com, @yearsandyears





ADVERTORIAL



Zurich

The Gay Metropolis of Switzerland

OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES, THIS TOLERANT, LIBERAL-MINDED CITY HAS BECOME HOME TO A LIVELY GAY AND LESBIAN SCENE

It's clear from just walking down the street that prejudice and discrimination are not an issue in Zurich. When you hear about the numerous special events held here, first and foremost the Zurich Pride Festival, it becomes even more apparent.

Various local associations and societies actively work together and fight for the rights of and equality for the LGBT community. The city has the most vibrant assortment of late-night bars and clubs in Switzerland – countless parties and establishments create a nightlife that is more colorful than a rainbow.

Zurich's nightlife offers the LGBT community a broad and varied bouquet of clubs and parties. Numerous party promoters in various, changing locations guarantee a lively ambiance. Particularly popular are the events staged by the largest gay party organiser, Angels. They include the Kitsch Party, featuring bizarre decorations, and the White Party, where guests are required to wear white. More out-of-the-ordinary is the twice-yearly Gay Cruise on Lake Zurich, complete with dinner and DJ.

The Zurich Pride Festival has happened annually since 2009. The three-day program features an opening and closing party, bars and food stands at the festival site, a series of concerts and shows, various parties, conferences on specific themes, and a parade through the inner city. Up to 30,000 people take part in the festival every year.

Since the year 2000, the "Warmer Mai" (Warm May), a cultural month, is held annually, focusing on LGBT themes in the fields of art and culture.

zuerich.com/lgbt

WARMER MAI (WARM MAY)
5-31 May 2015
City of Zurich
warmermai.ch

WHITE PARTY WEEKEND
8 -10 May 2015
Club Heaven, Club X-TRA, Alte Kaserne
angels.ch

ZURICH PRIDE FESTIVAL
19-20 June 2015
Zurich City Center
zhpf.ch

STREET PARADE (TECHNO FESTIVAL)
29 August 2015
Zurich Lakeside
streetparade.com

GAY-SCHIFF (GAY BOAT)
13 June & 5 September 2015
Lake Zurich, Bürkliplatz
zsg.ch







WORDS STEPHEN CONWAY

WARM BODIES

It might sound tacky, but bodies come in all shapes and sizes. It can be hard to find the right pair of anything if you're not happy with the state of your own body. While some might look amazing in a set of pants – see this issue's style model, Game of Thrones star Reece Noi – others might still be a work in progress. And that's OK. The best attribute to any man is self-determination, according to our feature designer duo Bodybound, and we happen to agree. Spring has sprung so soon that pale skin will be back on show, so step up or start the work out routine. You don't have to have the perfect body, just be happy with the skin you're in. Oprah moment over, now enjoy some hot boys in next to nothing as you chow down on that second bag of crisps. ■

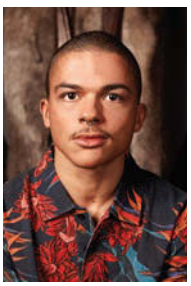
PHOTOGRAPHY EDDIE BLAGBROUGH
GROOMING EVAN HUANG
UNDERWEAR BY BARCODE BERLIN



[80]
Bound for glory
Design duo Bodybound give us their top picks for this year's spring/summer season. ■



[84]
Watch the Throne
Reece Noi takes a break from Westeros to pose in not-a-lot-of clothes for our style shoot. ■



[92]
Manscaping
From Gillette's latest technology to Ben Cohen's new range – the grooming essentials you can't live without. ■




BODYBOUND AW15

Body double **We chat to the design duo from London-based menswear brand Bodybound. Find out what the boys really think about clothes, fashion and the perfect body...**


BODYBOUND AW15

Tell us about Bodybound?
We're obsessed by the future and technology, and take much of our inspiration from cinema.
We try to use mechanical processes and technical innovation to interrogate the masculine aesthetic. Bodybound is a futuristic offering of modern luxury menswear.
Working in fashion, do you feel under pressure to always look your best? It's not that we aren't aware of pressures to look a certain way, it's that we're more interested in the quality and appearance of our work. That's what we channel all our energies into, all our blood sweat and tears. In everything that we do, when we design, style our looks, dress ourselves, we try to communicate something about our beliefs, what Bodybound stands for.
We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to make Bodybound the best vehicle to portray our vision of modernity.
What brands do you wear other than your own? We make a lot of our own clothes, sometimes as Bodybound, and sometimes just for ourselves.
Often it's the lot of designers to create beautiful and very expensive garments and never afford to wear them.
We like Alexander McQueen, we appreciate skilled tailoring, and also the masculine volumes of Juun J.
On the other hand, we also love our Nike trainers – what we wear is quite diverse.
Describe your personal style?
Sporty futurism.
One essential thing every man should own regardless of his size?
Self-determination.
Best kept styling secret that you use in your own life? Buy quality.
Who has the ideal Bodybound body? Chappie. ■

bodybound.net,
instagram.com/bodyboundstudio

WORDS STEPHEN CONWAY



ALEXANDER MCQUEEN, £415, FARFETCH.COM



APRIY, £66, PASAR-PASAR.COM



APRIY, £89, PASAR-PASAR.COM



MAISON MARGIELA, £849, FARFETCH.COM

BODYBOUND

give us their picks for spring/summer in black, white and red



STUTTERHEIM, £224, FARFETCH.COM



BALMAIN, £654, FARFETCH.COM

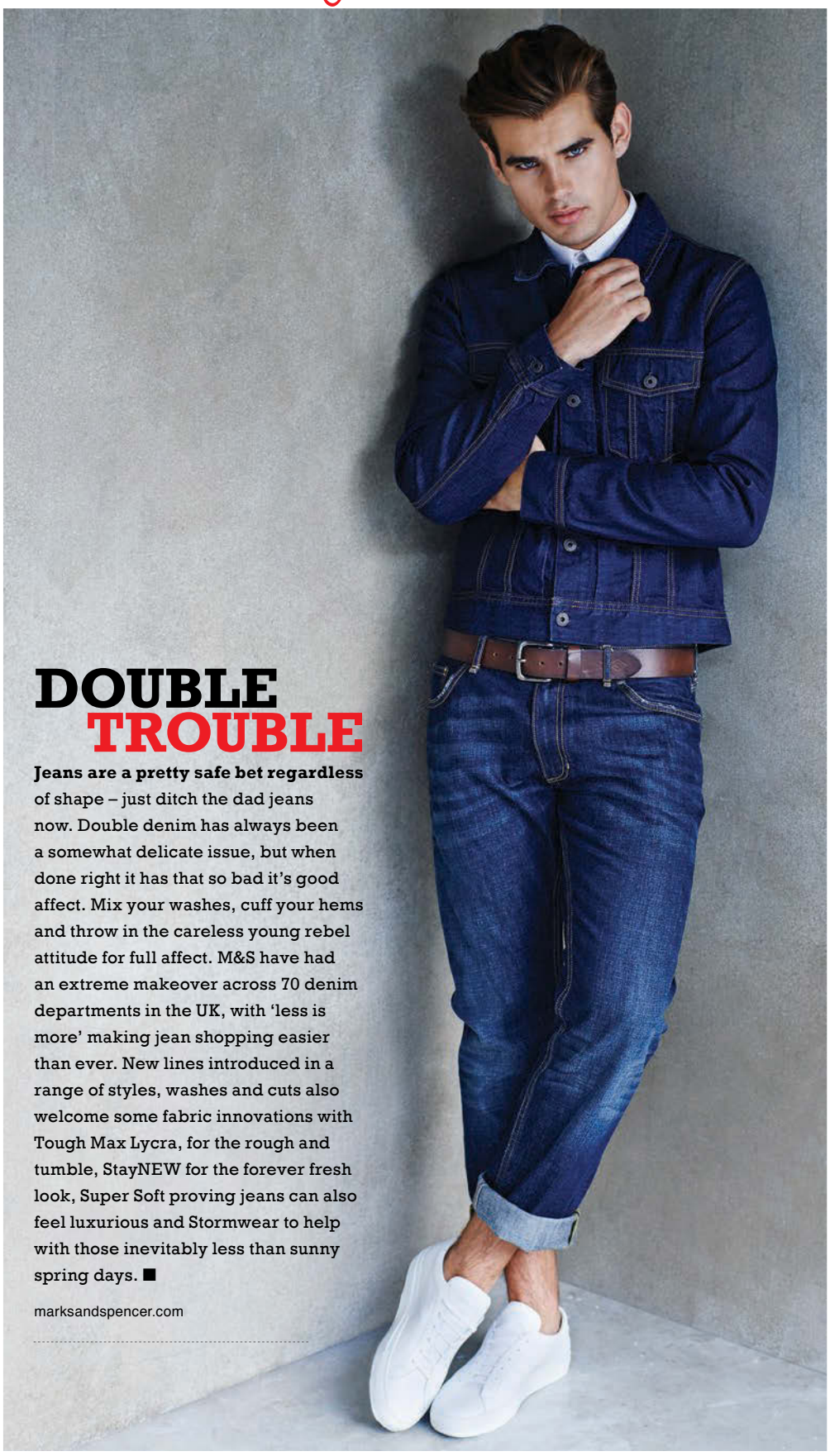


GIVENCHY, £900, FARFETCH.COM



NIKE ZOOM HYPERREV, £95, NIKE.COM

it's in the jeans...



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Jeans are a pretty safe bet regardless of shape – just ditch the dad jeans now. Double denim has always been a somewhat delicate issue, but when done right it has that so bad it's good affect. Mix your washes, cuff your hems and throw in the careless young rebel attitude for full affect. M&S have had an extreme makeover across 70 denim departments in the UK, with 'less is more' making jean shopping easier than ever. New lines introduced in a range of styles, washes and cuts also welcome some fabric innovations with Tough Max Lycra, for the rough and tumble, StayNEW for the forever fresh look, Super Soft proving jeans can also feel luxurious and Stormwear to help with those inevitably less than sunny spring days. ■

marksandspencer.com



NORTH COAST JACKET, £39.50



BLUE HARBOUR SHIRT, £39.50



REGULAR FIT STRETCH JEANS, £22.50

WORDS STEPHEN CONWAY



flower power

One of the worst pick up lines has to be "Nice shoes," but with these light loafers the options might be limited. If you don't want to look like a floral explosion, try just a dash of bright and bold with these Polo by Ralph Lauren Hawaiian print skate shoes. A perfect shoe suits anybody anytime, so why not make yours a floral paradise? ■

Polo by Ralph Lauren, from £75, schuh.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN GRIBBEN
LEAVES FROM WILDABOUT FLOWERS



PHOTOGRAPHY EDDIE BLAGBROUGH
WORDS CHRIS MANDLE
STYLIST STEPHEN CONWAY
GROOMING EVAN HUANG
USING MAC + BUMBLE & BUMBLE
SHOT AT ARCHER STREET – SOHO BAR, ARCHERSTREET.CO.UK
THIS PAGE SHIRT BY ELEMENT
OPPOSITE SHORTS GIVENCHY, AVAILABLE AT MR PORTER

REECE NOI

We plucked Reece from the side of Daenerys Targaryen, dressed him in some fancy clobber and snapped away. And why? Because summer is coming...



At this time of year – as it has been for the past five years – telling anyone you don't watch Game of Thrones is tantamount to swearing fealty to UKIP. It'll draw gasps. There'll be outcries. But all that outrage is justified; the HBO show has steamrolled into the biggest thing on telly. And it's only getting bigger and bigger each year, feasting on its own success like a perpetually hungry dragon.

Someone who knows this all too well is 26-year-old Reece Noi, a relative newcomer to the ancient world of direwolves, warring and half-dead ice men. Reece joined the show last year in a small appearance as a slave freed by hot-headed (wo)man of the common people Daenerys Targaryen [Emilia Clarke], but this year, he's been brought back. It's a pretty big deal, given the show thrives on having characters killed in the most grizzly ways possible, but Reece is ecstatic.

"I'll tell you how I knew it was big," he tells GT, between posing in front of the camera for his shoot. "I've been acting for 15 years, in big shows." He's been on Grange Hill and Waterloo Road to name just two. "But never have I had the response from people I've had on Thrones. It's a part that is, honestly, pretty small in the grand scale of things, but people I haven't heard from in years are telling me that they can't believe I'm on it. It's mad."

He admits he was "blink and miss" in series four, but his character – long-thought to be named Keyr but, he tells us, has been since given the name Mossador – gets something of a promotion. When GT got to watch the world premiere of series five's first episode last month, Mossador was seen in Daenerys' inner circle in the temple of Meereen, advising her on the former slave city's tricky political matters. And as a native of Meereen, Mossador speaks almost exclusively in High Valyrian, one of the show's many fictional languages.

"When I got my script I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown," he admits, laughing. "I got it back and had this big monologue. There was loads. There's a guy who writes [the language] and then we have a person on set, Jan, she helps us learn it. It's slowed down, phonetically, to make it easier."

To prove the teaching method trumps anything Rosetta Stone could accomplish, Reece reels off an impressive – if indecipherable – Valyrian utterance that sounds pretty epic, especially here, in a basement in Soho.

"Emilia [Clarke] came up to me once and said, 'Are you actually Valyrian?' I think she was impressed!"

On set, Reece is modelling floral prints, bright flashes of colour and the sort of vibrant clothes that could brighten up any gale-force Wednesday afternoon. In keeping with the theme, he also spends a lot of time shirtless, but anyone who has followed him on Twitter can attest that this is no bad thing.





SHIRT BY EDWIN



THIS PAGE SHIRT BY TOPMAN
SHORTS BY PENFIELD
OPPOSITE JACKET BY ACNE
TROUSERS BY T BY ALEXANDER WANG
AVAILABLE AT MR PORTER


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BELLUNO
ALTA LODGE · IN THE WASATCH MOUNTAINS
JUST ABOVE SALT LAKE CITY · 81,000 FT.
DURRANCE SKI SCHOOL · SKI CHAIR LIFT
SNOW FROM NOV. TO MAY · ALPINE TOURING
aosta

"I'm quite comfortable doing that sort of thing," he says, smirking. "I do yoga and I usually practice it in next to nothing."

He's been doing it for three years, and got addicted through hot yoga classes. "But now I do it myself. I'll get up at 6am and do at least an hour. It's completely changed my life, my focus, it's made me feel so calm. I sleep well. I don't drink anymore, either, and I can safely say I don't think I'll ever drink again."

Seeing him in the flesh – no pun intended – it's hard to believe him when he says he doesn't go to the gym; he's got toned arms and a really impressive body. "I went to the gym for about two weeks when I was 18. It just wasn't for me. This is all yoga and eating well.

"I basically bumped into an actress friend of mine," – Reece later tell us it's actual Maxine Peake, which is amazing – "She looked so fresh-faced and healthy, and she told me she'd just been doing yoga. After that I knew I had to get involved."

The actor likes to keep details about his private life just that, but he's happy to discuss everything from his time on set to his famous mates. "I was in Soho and ran into Chloë Sevigny recently, I know her from working on [transgender spy drama] Hit and Miss, but I haven't seen her for ages. And she was just like, 'Oh my God, I've just seen you in Game of Thrones!' I couldn't believe she'd noticed me

"And I'm close to the Thrones lot. Obviously you only see the people you spend time with on set, so in Croatia I hung out a lot with Nathalie [Emmanuel, who plays former slave Missandei] and Jacob [Anderson, who plays eunuch super soldier Grey Worm]. We'd go for dinner, go to the beach, sometimes head to the ocean. It was just round the corner from the hotel. Croatia's a beautiful place. I felt bad for the cast members filming in the freezing cold somewhere north!"

While the dust is only just kicking up again with the new series of GoT, Reece is already busy on new projects. He features in Away, an intense, intelligent film set in Blackpool starring Timothy Spall and Juno Templeton. "She runs away from a violent boyfriend, she meets him, and they go on a little journey. My character's... I almost said unsavoury, but no. He's just lost."

After that is a film Reece describes as Sweeney Todd, but set in a kebab shop. "This guy goes around killing people and using their flesh in his kebabs. It's another psychopath film! I rarely play someone nice and friendly. I read this and loved it, there's a weird macabre humour to it, and it's a beautiful story."

He cackles as he utters that last bit, fully aware of how it sounds. After the shoot, which was all vibrant and colourful, Reece has opted to stick to the basics. Skinny jeans, a big parka, a woolly hat.

"I like to stick to what I know, but sometimes I look like an art student or something," he admits. "It's easy to stick to what you know."

Can he reveal if his Game of Thrones character will make it through the season? Of course he bloody can't, although it's not through lack of trying on our part.

"I'd love to come back, who knows," he teases. "But as an actor, you're constantly trying to shed one thing and move on, try new things, develop. It's win-win for me. But I'm enjoying playing someone good. My character's a nice lad, he wants the right thing."

A good guy doing the right thing doesn't sound like a natural fit for the morally twisted world of Game of Thrones, but Reece certainly knows how to stand out from the crowd, even if it is by being one of the most likeable guys on the telly. Luckily, it's not the last you'll be seeing of him. ■

Game of Thrones series five airs on Mondays, Sky Atlantic, from 13 April, @gameofthrones, @reecenoi





JUMPER BY JW ANDERSON
TROUSERS BY SACAI
AVAILABLE AT MR PORTER

BEN'S BITS

Rugby, dancing, underwear, anti-bullying... And now grooming. Hairy, beary icon Ben Cohen has launched his own range of grooming tools that are almost as sleek and sexy as the man himself... ■

From £8.50, Boots stores and eleganttouch.com



Grooming on the go

Sister brand of L'Occitane, Le Couvent Des Minimes have combined their most-loved products – including cologne, shower gel, soap and hand healer – for their Discovery Collection. And all in handy travel size bottles. ■ £10, boots.com



WORDS DARREN SCOTT

IT'STHEDOGS...

Bulldogs, that is. Their new face scrub has eight essential oils, oat kernel, shea butter and olive seed to gently exfoliate the skin. ■ £4.99, at Tesco and Asda





Hit you like a truck **With just 1,000 limited edition numbered bottles available, we had to snap up this stunning unisex scent from Laboratory Perfumes. Tonka mixes pink peppercorn with the earthy vanilla of the tonka bean for a seriously sultry hit.** From £60, laboratoryperfumes.com

On the ball

The latest razor from Gillette includes FlexBall technology, responding to contours in order to seek out virtually every stray hair. First question – does this make manscaping easier? Answer – yes. Gillette Fusion ProGlide, £12 manual, £15 power, gillette.com/flexball ■



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THAT BASIC BLACK IS COMING BACK...

Did you know that The Rocky Horror Picture Show does indeed have a sequel? Well you should, because Shock Treatment is not only the continuation of the lives of Brad (asshole) and Janet (slut) – it's an incredible piece of work that was years ahead of its time. And now it's finally a stage show, as it comes to London for its world premiere. Back in 1981 Richard O'Brien foresaw our obsession with reality shows and becoming celebrity – all set to a soundtrack that, dare we say it, eclipses its predecessor... ■

Shock Treatment is at The King's Head Theatre, London, from 17 April, kingsheadtheatre.com

[97] Rae of Light
"There's no rule against who you fall in love with." GT meets pop singer du jour Rae Morris. ■



[98] Since she's been gone...
Kelly Clarkson takes us through her cracking new album Piece by Piece, piece by piece. ■



[104] Mama, we love you
Gypsy hits the West End for the first time in 40 years – with Imelda Staunton, no less! ■





Citizens!
European Soul
New indie boy band on the block Citizens! are one of those acts that sound like so many other people, that eventually we'll just have to accept that they sound exactly like themselves. If we were leaning over an X Factor judging table, we'd tell them in our best Louis Walsh accent, "You're like a young ELO!" Before going all Natalia Kills on them. Yet, for all the throwbacks, European Soul sounds fresh and modern. The majority of songs are about wooing girls in public spaces and have a Wham-like waft of tropicana funk, sounding like something that's not a million miles away from Chromeo. The vocals are often in an alluringly androgynous falsetto, held up by kitsch backing vocals, edging into the realms of Glass Candy and Metronomy. There's all number of soft electronics dropped in and we're pretty sure there's a lavish, porny 70s style keytar solo on more than one occasion. It's joyously upbeat and there are times – on All I Want Is You, for instance – where you could be listening to Mika. Citizens! are the best vintage pop band we've heard in ages. And one of them has a moustache – so there's some hope there, right? ■■■■■

Lucy Spraggan
We Are… Leaving behind some of the early 'bitt-ah' Kate Nash banter, Lucy Spraggan's acoustic open mic night guitar anthems have gone up a level. The lead single Unsinkable and subsequent album has its sight set firmly on the Coldplay demographic, laced with piano and lighters aloft sing-a-longs. ■■■■■

Madeon Adventure An almost faultless debut of 8-bit influenced electro funk that takes on the basslines of Justice, the more listenable melodies of Crystal Castles and the grinning radio friendliness of Owl City. Over the top of all this are vocals with more soul than one hundred boybands melted down into one man. ■■■■■

Mew +/- Mew have this canny trick of writing songs packed with roller coaster fake choruses, minor twists, nosedives into post-punk drumming and dense layers of threadbare synths and acoustic guitars. These prop up Mew's uniquely angelic vocal harmonies. They're their own amazing subcategory of indie. ■■■■■



Zhala Zhala The freshest signing to the Robyn-run record label Konichiwa, Zhala's debut album is a melting pot of Grimes-esque hallucinogenic electro, peppered with surprising influences and reference points. Tracks like last single Holy Bubbles have a Neneh Cherry flavour to them, and Aerobic Lambada borrows heavily from Blondie's Rapture in terms of vocal delivery. She fits in perfectly with the Swedish pop landscape – Jenny Wilson springs to mind on I'm In Love – by nailing imperfect pop structures. In short, Zhala has revived the electronic and ambient mix of Kylie's Impossible Princess era. ■■■■■





Chungking Defender Brighton-bred Chungking's 2007 album Stay Up Forever took quite a hammering in one quiet corner of the GT office way back when. With a hand from Richard X, they produced a sadly overlooked pop classic – but we will not forget. Years later and we're offered up a less poppy album of equally easy to miss classics. They basically draw on the later career stylings of ABBA, bleeding into Moroder-inspired electro, spitting out the bubblegum elements of electro pop and replacing them with classier disco ones. Sprinkle in a few Kate Bush references for the breathy delivery and you've got a seductive package. ■■■■■

WORDS BOB HENDERSON

Rae Morris is one of the most humble women in pop right now. "It might sound really disingenuous but to release an album in itself was something that was beyond my biggest expectations," she tells us. "And then for it to be received so well was also a huge thing, so I'm really grateful."

Her debut album Unguarded is an unbroken string of alterno-pop hits. We gave it four stars on it's release and would've gone the full 4.5 if we could cut stars in half. It took the Blackpool-born lass more than three years to make and finally give birth to.

"I feel like a mum who's let their kid go out into the world."

And what a well behaved kid it is, proudly creeping into the top ten in its first week. Rae initially went into songwriting with nothing but her piano, but she's cross-pollinated all of this with collaborations with Fryars and dabbling into electronics, much like her appearance on Clean Bandit's debut – another prime example of classical string arrangements mixed into cutting edge pop. Her last single Love Again is possibly her most upbeat song on an album that enjoys writhing in the throes and woes of romantic entanglement.

"When I first started writing it was very easy to use songwriting as a tool to get out my emotions as a diary really," Rae explains. "I find it very easy to write about deeply personal emotions – and they're always usually quite dark. But I think by the end of the recording process I realised I was really happy and having this incredible time, and Love Again was a really happy time in my life."

It shows in the way Rae laughs, and the way she's so calm and open to discuss anything. She spoke about her relationship with a woman to The Independent and we love that she doesn't feel the need to buy into a specific sexual identity. A bit rich for a gay magazine, possibly, but life would certainly be easier for everyone if same-sex relationships weren't still an eyebrow raiser.

"I'm cautious because people can define you for that and I think it's very important for young people to know that it really doesn't matter, human beings are human beings, and I want people to know that there doesn't have to be a boundary, there doesn't have to be a rule against who you can fall in love with and who you can't fall in love with."

Exactly. We've spoken to new acts who won't talk about their sexuality full stop, and it's a little sad in this day and age.

"If I met someone I wouldn't care if they were gay or not gay or male or female. There's no reason to even really care about it. I just want people to know me for my music, and if they want to know about that as well, then it's totally fine."

But people are always interested – and it's even inspired a few hardcore Morris fans.

"I did have one experience with a girl who came up to me after the show and she said 'Oh, I noticed that you say "she" sometimes in the lyrics.' And in the earlier songs there is that. She said, 'Can you just tell me? I feel strange, I want to know more.' I felt like she really needed to know that it was cool. I felt that was a really important moment. And if there was any way that what I went through could help her with what she's going through, then that's all I'd ever want from my music. That's the point of music, isn't it?" We couldn't agree more. ■

Rae Morris' debut album Unguarded is out now, raemorris.co.uk, @raemorrismusic



The original American Idol has been at it for 13 years, has 13 tattoos and has now unleashed her sixth studio album Piece by Piece. It's an eclectic, modern pop masterpiece – and gives GT the perfect excuse to get to grips with the pieces of the puzzle that make up Kelly Clarkson all over again

We're in the presidential suite of Kelly Clarkson's UK record label and she's recycling a teabag to see her through our lengthy chat about her latest record. She's had more hits that she can keep track of – "I'll be sitting somewhere and a song will come on and I'm like 'That's me, stop singing!'" – and her new album is not short of bangers nor ballads.

Our personal favourite is Good Goes The Bye, which sounds like all the best bits of Taylor Swift's 1989 in one track. Kelly understandably says 'I love that song' to practically every track we bring up, but she says of the last track, "It reminds me of old school Eurythmics, a little bit like Annie Lennox." There are some indie rock moments that sounds like The Killers with Dance With Me, which to her ears is "a little bit like David Bowie meets ABBA." And then there are some curve balls like Take You High, which sound like no Clarkson song we've ever heard before.

"I love it because it sounds trippy. That was the one song where I kept going, 'Uh-uh, I want weirder. I want trippy orchestral elements and sampled voices doing dark weird stuff.' It feels like you're flying. Or falling. Either one."

The other surprise track for us was Someone, where Kelly sings she's "sorry I'm not sorry" for "saying all those shitty things." We find it quite hard to imagine Kelly Clarkson saying shitty things.

"Oh, I don't find it hard," she laughs. "I had fun. Sometimes people send songs and it's the typical straight up Since U Been Gone #4, and I'm like, 'Oh my God this is going to be terrible.' And so I listened to [Someone] laying in bed with my husband. We were so quiet and both looked at eachother and I was like, 'This is the most poetic thing ever.' It's so pretty and dark and truthful and everyone feels that." There's, to wheel out a much used phrase, something for everyone on this album. And of course, no modern pop album is complete these days without a Sia co-writing credit. Piece By Piece has two, including the single Invincible.

"I think the thing that's similar about her and myself as writers is we're both about empowerment – and that's what I loved about that song." She was sent the song that was written by her producer Jesse Shatkin and Sia just as her own album was about to be finished.

"I called him right back and was like, 'You're an asshole!' 'Cos this is really good and this means you're gonna have to come into town and record it. I was recovering from surgery," after her pregnancy, which she's talked at length about in other interviews – and so we gave it a wide berth.

"So that's why I was like, 'Arrgh!' But anyway, it was great. It sounds like Stronger on steroids. That's my take."

Despite calling her album Piece by Piece, it's got nothing to do with jigsaw puzzles – though the deluxe box set comes with something resembling one. We still end up chatting about our secret pastime.

"You know what I love? I love a mindless arts and crafts project. I just love sitting down, putting some music on, drinking a glass of wine. I'm a puzzle girl as well."

Clarkson even has a jigsaw tattoo she had done in Amsterdam.

"How it is on me is, it's like you've removed the top layer of me and you can see inside," she says, "so inside the puzzle piece is this little tornado with a golden brick road and a hot air balloon, a kind of Wizard of Oz theme."

It's one of the many times we've ended up saying 'amazing' to Kelly Clarkson.

"It's like you peek inside. It's a very dark tattoo actually, it was a childhood thing I loved but also it worked for my life at the time. I feel like when I got this tattoo, I don't even know how many years ago, I felt no matter how hard I clicked I just couldn't find a home. And by home, I just mean I've always longed for a family. A solid family foundation and I just hadn't had that.

"Well, I guess if you get tattoos they just come true! 'Cos I got one, I got three kids and a husband. So apparently I have a genie somewhere."

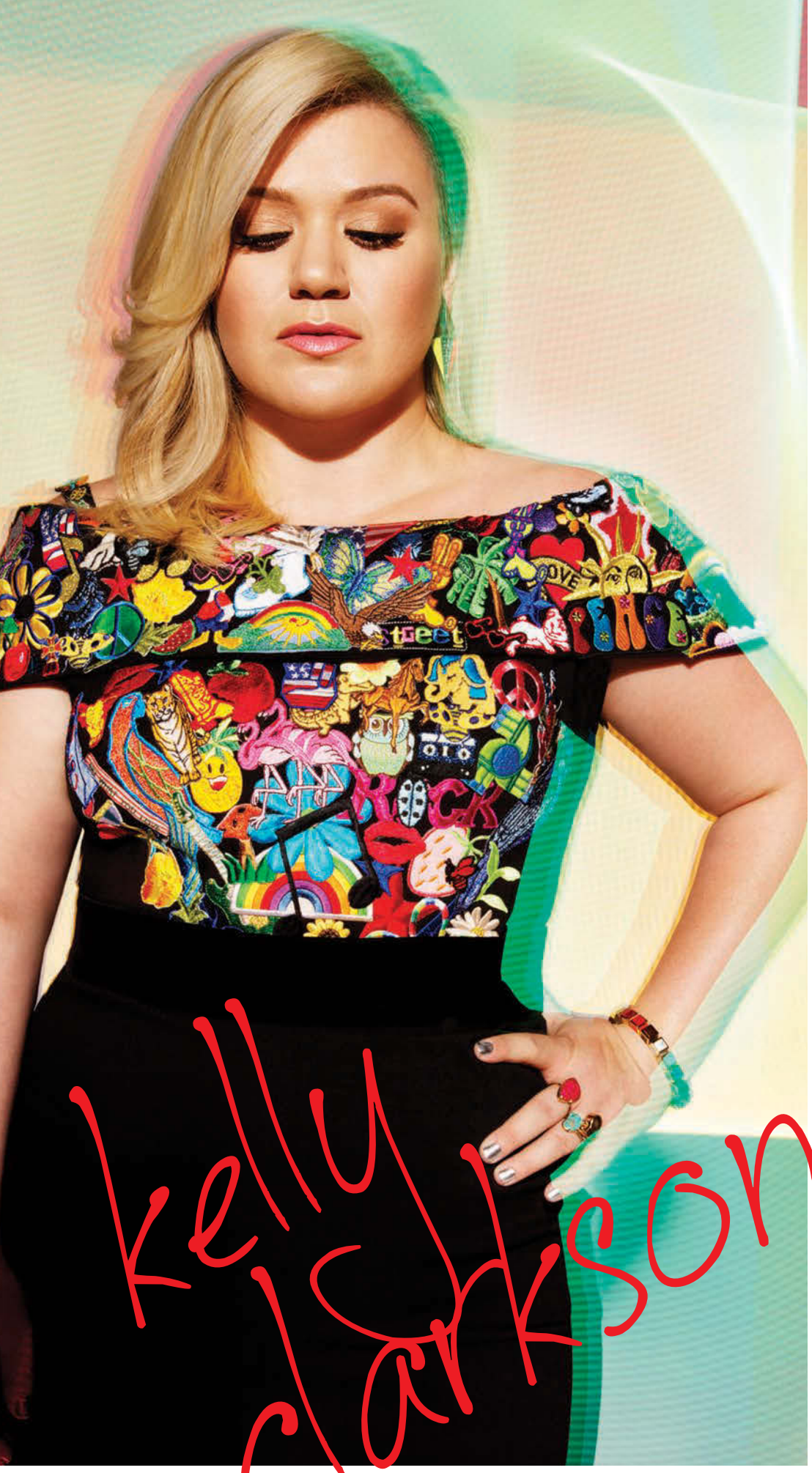
Even if Kelly can't help us click our own heels – "Where do you find great men?! I stayed really close to home, he's my manager's son." – she did bring the house down the other month with an intimate gig in a gay bar in London. "Most amazing time ever," is how she put it.

"I mean, it was the perfect thing. I love the intimacy factor of anything like that."

The first single off her latest album, Heartbeat Song, hadn't even come out at that point.

"It was so weird, everybody knew the words. I was on stage shocked and I kept thinking, 'Am I hearing the feedback bouncing back?' And then I was watching everyone's mouths move and it





was just the most remarkable thing. To have that many people crammed in and having such an awesome time, singing every word. And it was so hot it was like a sauna, but it was great."

Of course, the video for that song features a few of our own, which Kelly discovered during a radio interview in her adopted hometown of the last eight years, Nashville, Tennessee.

"He didn't know that his boyfriend was going to propose to him. No one knew, so he was kinda confused in the video because he was going, 'Is this real? Or for the video?' It was just the most amazing thing to capture that live, and them embracing and that kiss, that was real."

It is a bit of a statement to put that in your video, we try to argue.

"It's funny, we didn't actually mean to do it as a statement because I think in the artistic community we're so far past that. Equal rights is a no brainer. It's almost like we're in some bubble. All of a sudden I'll be in an interview and someone will say like, 'Oh, that's quite statement,' and I'll be like, 'Was it?!'"

We just think it's great that someone with such a platform as Kelly Clarkson is happy to throw a gay couple in her video without a second thought and openly acknowledge and embrace her gay fans. Surely Beyoncé has the memo by now? Anyway, Kelly doesn't think she's special for it, and that's great too.

"I think a lot of people are like, 'Screw you! I'm gonna put this in my video because this is life. Accept it or go live on Mars.' I'm tired of talking about it. You know what I'm saying? I'm tired of it even being an issue, because it's silly. Everyone should have equal rights, that's it. Hello!"

Hello indeed. ■

Piece by Piece is out now, kellyclarkson.com, @kelly_clarkson

Twin Shadow is the nom de plume of George Lewis Jr – a fringed leather jacket fan and the new favourite poster-boy who's dominating our playlists. On the one hand, he has this trendy and dramatic edge to his work, but really he's a pop boy at heart and this secretly leaks out in unusual places throughout his mesmerising third album Eclipse. There are obvious tracks like When The Lights Turn Out, which would be a mega-credible Eurovision entry or an incredible Rihanna song. Then there's Old Love, New Love which will sound familiar to a few gamers – having appeared in Grand Theft Auto V – and it's one of the album's hands-in-the-air moments, throwing down some house piano and an oh-oh-oh sing-a-long boyband chorus. But even in Locked and Loaded there's some stadium rocking U2 vibe, while Watch Me Go could hold its own on a bleak version of Robyn's Body Talk. Twin Shadow is entrancing in whatever musical stance he's taking and we reckon there's not a pop snob out there who won't fall for Eclipse. ■

Twin Shadow's album Eclipse is out 18 May, twinshadow.net @twinshadow



[playlist]

Grimes REALiTi Subdued and breezy electro from the Pokémon of pop. It's like a découpage of odd sound scraps that thread together in one harmonious whole without losing all their strange little timbres. Roll on the next album. ■ **Conor Maynard Talking About** From the pen of Craig David and with a cameo in the video, Conor Maynard has morphed stylistically into his mentor in all but facial hair. And even that's only a matter of time. ■ **Jason Derulo Want to Want Me** It's moot point using the word 'commercial' in relation to Derulo, but this is one amazing slice of Prince-ly electro pop. It's so mainstream and yet so weirdly unexpected, being dated and futuristic at the same time. It's brilliant. ■ **Mumford and Sons Believe** They've put down the banjos and ditched the hummable melodies, too. After two minutes, a screechy guitar solo heralds the start of the song, by which point we're harbouring horrible thoughts about pushing someone off their bike in the video. ■ **Dannii Minogue Summer Of Love** A welcome return to the true 'indie' princess and rightful heir to full gay adoration. It's a standard Pride float backing track, but still… We're crossing our fingers for impending greatness. ■ **Carly Rae Jepsen I Really Like You** The smell of poppers set to music, Carly yet again reminds us that in trying to play it cool in the dating game, she's soundtracked the crazy desperation of clingy, needy, overbearing dating partners. You're alright, OK? ■

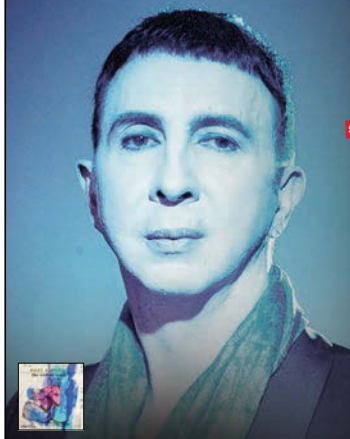
all boxed up



We love a box set in this corner, especially one with vinyl in it. Laurent Garnier's The HOME Box contains four vinyls, one traditional compact disc and a hand numbered poster. There'll only be 1,000 of them and then that's it. Garnier has a knack for nifty song titles – MILF, Revenge of the LOL Cat and pɔsnɹuoɔ being a few standouts – and specialises in minimal not-exactly-house, not-exactly-techno, but some kind of dance genre that has it's fingers in many pies. No handbags down the gay bar, but rather ambient, sample-speckled instrumental dance music. It's quite a heavy chunk of material to digest in one sitting, but being spread over so many LPs gives you the necessary breaks to flip the record. And it's a collection that's rare – not just in number, but for bringing together five different labels from as many countries. laurentgarnier.com ■

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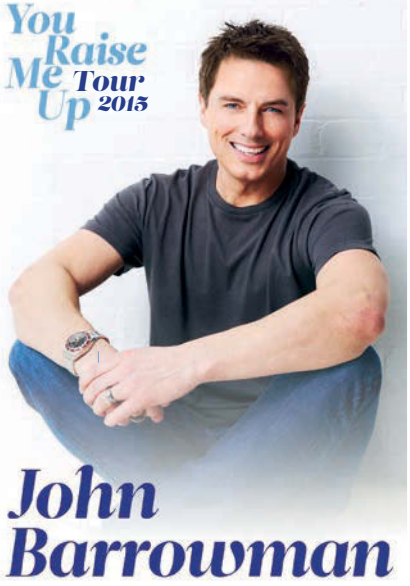


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Mama Rose is back to tread the boards in London. This time, it's Imelda's turn to show why the Queen of Gypsies isn't a regular mom, she's a cool mom...

Don't go calling Imelda Staunton a national treasure or she might give you a withering Dolores Umbridge look and punish you accordingly. "I think it's an overused term," says this most beloved of British thesps. "You can say it about Alan Bennett but you can't say it about me."

That's that then, though GT begs to differ. Imelda's been in the business for nearly four decades and she's brilliant in everything she does – be it her Oscar-nominated turn as loveable backstreet abortionist Vera Drake in Mike Leigh's film of the same name, the aforementioned Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher in two Harry Potter films, or that big belter Mama Rose in Gypsy, an ovations-every-night performance she's brought to the West End after a sell-out run in Chichester last year.

This pushiest of showbiz mums – for whom everything most certainly doesn't come up roses as she tries desperately to make successes of her two daughters, only to see the second one succeed and force her into the background – has been played by everyone from Ethel Merman to Patti LuPone via Angela Lansbury and Tyne Daly.

Mama Rose is, of course, something of a gay icon. Though if you ask Imelda why that is, she's amusingly flummoxed. "I don't bloody know," says the 59-year-old actress. "Why do you think it is? Come on!"

For all the obvious reasons: She's a strong, feisty character who takes no nonsense from no man, never lives life at half-measures and can sure belt out a tune. "But it covers a lot of bases with a lot of people," is Imelda's take on the classic musical, "whether you're gay, a mother, a kid who wants to go into the business. It works on many levels. It isn't just 'Ooh, funny showbiz mum.'" She laughs. "But I don't care who comes to see it. I'm just grateful when anyone comes."

After her brilliant turn as the villainous pie-making Mrs Lovett in Sweeney Todd a few years back, if anyone can put bums on musical theatre seats it's Imelda Staunton. It's also in musical theatre that the convent-schooled, RADA-trained Londoner got her big break when, after six years touring the country in rep, she did Guys and Dolls at the National Theatre.

She's been doing amazing work on stage and screen ever since, with Vera Drake earning her numerous awards – though not the elusive Oscar – and Dolores Umbridge in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 being the role she most gets recognised for. "Families see films like that, so you've got three or four people seeing them rather than just one person seeing Vera Drake," she explains.

Just as she views Mama Rose as so much more than "funny showbiz mum", she reckons there's a lot more to Dolores than her faux Chanel suits. "That role was more serious than even I thought it was," she says of the character she played to scarily clipped perfection. "It wasn't just 'Ooh, silly funny lady in pink.' She's a pretty dangerous woman but yes, in fabulous outfits. She was pretty horrible, but it was wonderful to have that amount of power and that amount of pink wool."

Imelda jokes about terrorising her young co-stars. "I made their lives a misery," she laughs. "I didn't, of course, and what a nice bunch of kids they all were, with their feet on the ground, working hard year in and year out. All I did was swan in and out again."

Did she get to keep any of those fabulous outfits? She squeals in mock horror. "Did I keep them? Are you out of your mind?" But it's not unknown for actors to take home keepsakes from movie sets, is it? "Yes, but not from Harry Potter, baby. You don't get anything off that set."

Imelda was considerably dowdier in last year's Pride, where she played Hefina Headon – one of the Welsh villagers pushing for the alliance between miners and gay and lesbian activists in a true story she didn't hesitate to help tell on screen. "It's a story that, my God, we need now more than ever, about people helping each other and about tolerance. You couldn't have gotten two more opposite factions of society who were prepared to stick their necks out and help someone else."

There's a very funny scene in the film where Headon and her gal pals hit a gay club. Has Imelda ever popped into one herself? "Years ago, yes," she says. "I went to Heaven. Marvellous! I haven't been to loads of gay clubs but they know how to have a good time."

The ballsy battle-axe of a character, who sadly died just as filming began, must have been fun to play, but that's not why the actress signed on. "Having fun with something isn't high on my agenda. Making it right and making it true is top of my agenda. I wanted to uphold her reputation, which was enormous and she was held with such huge affection."

As indeed is Imelda. And by none other than Stephen Sondheim, Gypsy's lyricist and Sweeney Todd's writer-composer, who saw her in the latter and told her she HAD to play Rose. "That

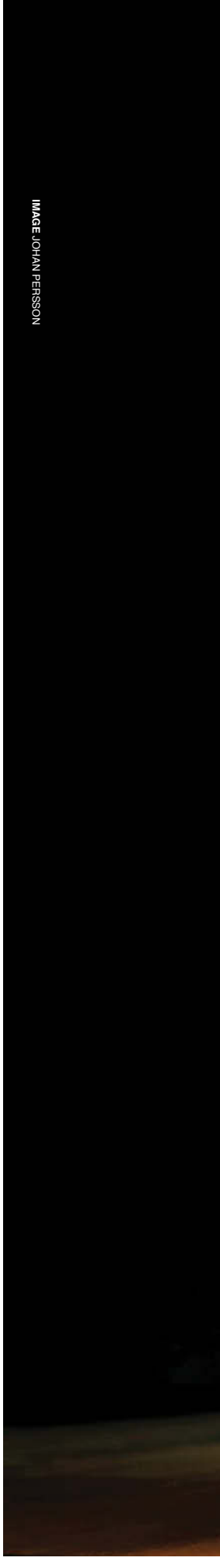


IMAGE JOHAN PERSSON



imelda staunton

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

made me a bit anxious. I said 'Do I? Really?' I was a bit frightened but I thought, 'He's asked me so what am I gonna do? Refuse? No.'"

It is, she admits, an exhausting show to do. "You don't have a life," she sighs. And the biggest challenge? "All of it! Everything is challenging and everything is a nightmare. There's no let up and that's why it's so demanding, because when you're not singing you're barking at someone. There aren't many quiet moments or a point where you go 'This is easy.' It's full on."

And how is it getting your tongue around those tricky Sondheim lyrics? "It's so satisfying because it's so difficult, but it's just speeches to a different tune. He says himself he likes actors to do his work. I can always tell when a singer is listening to his or her own voice and there's nothing more boring. You just have to tell the story."

Imelda admires Sondheim but, unlike the rest of us, she's not in awe of him. "Well, at least not like some people are. I can look him in the eye and talk about the work, and his hunger for knowledge and other people's stories is enormous, so it's a privilege to be in his company."

The notoriously hands-on composer will doubtless be there on opening night and Staunton intends to give the show her all that night, and at each and every performance. Leading her to joke that once the run is over: "I'll be going into rehab, obviously. I'll be in traction. I'll be a husk."

Her usual post-show ritual is home, a cuppa and bed, but won't she be tempted to pop into the Savoy's American Bar – which over the years has hosted the likes of Fred Astaire, Noël Coward, Audrey Hepburn and Judy Garland – to soak in some of that cocktail-drenched history? Imelda laughs. "Not for me, baby. Not unless they serve chamomile tea." ■

Gypsy is at the Savoy Theatre, London. gypsythemusical.uk, @gypsymusicalldn

[the list] **This issue's all about the body, so what finer time to relive some of cinema's maddest and most jaw-dropping on-screen physical transformations...**

[01] Christian Bale The Machinist Christian Bale is an attractive, stocky and consistently imposing man. Which is why his decimated transformation into an emaciated machinist – losing 62lbs in the process – shocked all the harder. ■

[02] Jake Gyllenhaal Nightcrawler Both you and our own libido thought we'd be talking about Jake's hench bulk-up for Prince of Persia. But it's his weight loss for Nightcrawler that helped shape one of his best performances yet. And for the record, we still would. ■

[03] Matthew McConaughey Dallas Buyers Club Once the poster boy for the rom-com action man six pack, McConaughey lost pounds but won gongs aplenty for his turn as an AIDS-sufferer. ■

[04] Charlize Theron Monster It's not like she gained or shed hundreds of pounds, but Theron – and her makeup team – should be commended for a physical transformation that proved she was much, much more than a pretty face. ■

[05] Chris Pratt Guardians of the Galaxy Millions loved Pratt's chubby jokester in Parks and Recreation even before he went full leading man on us, which is why his chiselled, ripped look in Guardians was all the more bewildering/arousing. ■

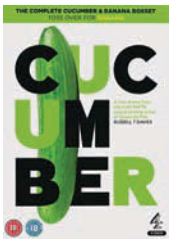


why we love carefree career comebacks

Trust us when we say that even WE were surprised by how entertainingly Keanu Reeves resurrects his flailing career with this month's John Wick. Especially as, while we love a good comeback, so many of them hinge on Oscar-baiting super-frowny-serious turns. From Matthew McConaughey reinventing himself from walking six pack to awards-bothering drama-fiend, to Ben Affleck's Gigli-banishing resurgence as an actor/director, the surefire route to critical acclaim is taking on a weighty topic or two. But it's turns like Reeves' that we really adore – actors who think they have so little left to lose that they embrace the ridiculous with a self-knowing abandon and kickstart their cinematic CV in a 'fuck it' way that's as much a win for us as them. Robert Downey Jr's Iron Man, Neil Patrick Harris' demonic ecstasy fiend in Harold and Kumar and now Reeves' ridiculous action hero in John Wick... We salute you. ■









The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt Netflix Fans of funny women, Tina Fey and 30 Rock should definitely tune into Netflix's newest original comedy, a broad and ridiculous sitcom with a killer conceit – a woman is reintroduced to the modern world after spending 15 years underground in a doomsday cult. Silliness ensues. Not quite as clever as it hopes to be, it's still another 'win' on Netflix's increasingly quality line-up of original programming. ■■■■■

The Hobbit Trilogy Blu-ray The 300ish page book that somehow became a seven hour (plus!) movie trilogy never managed to reach The Lord of the Rings' blend of compelling characterisation and jaw-dropping spectacle, but it's undeniably fine blockbuster movie-making and an enjoyably bombastic fantasy epic for those craving a return to Middle Earth. The movies are all here but the die-hards should wait for the bonus-stuffed extended editions. ■■■■■

Cucumber/Banana DVD Russell T Davies' return to gay drama was always going to come with a certain level of fevered expectation. While Cucumber and Banana never matched the heights or had quite the same impact of Queer as Folk, it was never less than unpredictable. Banana was arguably more enjoyable, but as Cucumber progressed, it cemented Davies' knack for the art of being able to grab you by the feels despite, or because of, its frustratingly flawed but never less than magnetic characters. ■■■■■

Bloodline Netflix The creative brain trust behind Damages reunite for a compelling thriller revolving around the Rayburn family and the high-wire tensions threatening to destroy the seeming idyll of their Florida Keys life. With a gobsmackingly solid cast and enough twists to punctuate the slow-burn build, it's a perfect accompaniment to Netflix's other binge-worthy dramas. ■■■■■

WORDS MATT RISLEY



Lost River Cinema
It's a matter of cinematic, natural and widespread sexual law that any movie involving Ryan Gosling deserves at least your fleeting attention. But what about a Ryan Gosling film without any Gosling in it? Gosling's directorial debut is a head-scratcher for many reasons; esoteric, wilfully obtuse and never less than intriguing, it's the definition of 'cult' – not something you'd immediately expect from The Notebook's swoonsome dreamboat.

The plot, what there is of it, concerns itself with the family of single mother Billy (Christina Hendricks), her son Bones (Iain De Caestecker) and their attempts to escape from a life as dilapidated as the city they live in, and the numerous menacing personalities that swirl around them – notably skinhead psycho Bully (an entertainingly against-type Matt Smith) and fetish club owner Dave (Ben Mendelsohn).

A dark, twisted and bonkers urban fairytale, it's full of disturbing imagery, an unsettling undercurrent and homages to pretty much every director Gosling's a fan of – Cianfrance, Lynch, Refn and more are all visible on-screen, a comparison that's both a blessing and curse – Gosling's own directorial identity is somewhat submerged. As bold as it is mad. ■■■■■

Hidden Away (A Escondidas) Cinema A heady mélange of heavy themes – poverty, racism, crime, homophobia – are given emotional relief in this affecting tale of forbidden teenage love, as an illegal Moroccan immigrant and Spanish schoolboy fall in love against the odds. A strong indie musical through line lifts the muted emotional exchanges to deliver an engaging teenage romance. ■■■■■

Clouds of Sils Maria Cinema Kristen Stewart continues her assault on the art-house crowd alongside indie darling Juliette Binoche in this melancholy meta-drama all about an ageing actress forced to confront the next generation and her own insecurities. A more sobering, sane Maps to the Stars with a star turn by Stewart. ■■■■■

The Duff Cinema What could be a tasteless one note gag – Duff stands for Designated Ugly Fat Friend – is worth a punt for fans of warm, witty teen flicks. With social media prevalent throughout and a hot young cast of new teen stars, this is Pygmalion for the 21st century. ■■■■■



Insurgent Cinema While Divergent was repeatedly called out as a flimsy The Hunger Games knock-off, Insurgent has the franchise finding its action-packed, albeit maudlin feet in a superior YA dystopian sci-fi adventure. Tris (Shailene Woodley) and Four (walking Action Man Theo James) are on the run from the hilariously unthreateningly-named Jeanine (Kate Winslet, giving fine matriarch bitch-face) and her crew of hunky meatheads. While the plot is po-faced, it boasts a fair few surprises, while the action is surprisingly brutal and the themes thought-provoking. Make the most of it before the inevitable, needlessly two-part finale slows things to a crawl. ■■■■■





John Wick Cinema Keanu Reeves stars in this… wait! WAIT! Come back! Or, rather, comeback. Yep, after years spent languishing in post-The Matrix naffness, John Wick signals Reeves' return to, if not the big time, at least a level of quality filmmaking we haven't seen from him in years. The titular antihero is a man heartbroken by the loss of his wife, but who finds solace in the delivery of a puppy. That is until Russian gangsters beat him up and kill the dog, sparking a hugely enjoyable, OTT vengeance mission that's as irreverent and unashamed as it is fun. ■■■■■

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Cult figure and gay author Chuck Palahniuk is writing a sequel to his bestselling hypersexual, ultra-violent novel Fight Club with comics publisher Dark Horse, giving us all a chance to find out what happens next.

This meditation on male aggression and the meaning of life was unforgettably brought to the screen in David Fincher's movie of the same name – starring Ed Norton's fists and, of course, Brad Pitt's abs, just pounding on each other – and Jared Leto – in a hot mess of loose teeth and a bit of blood spilt in the boardroom. Also, randomly, Meatloaf.

This is Fight Club 2, picking up the story a decade after the end of the novel, exploring the broken connection between Sebastian, the book's unnamed narrator, and his imaginary friend Tyler Durden.

Ten years following Project Mayhem, Sebastian's living a mundane life, married to Marla Singer and medicating to suppress you-know-who. Together they have this nice, normal suburban life, a son and a white picket fence. But TWIST! Marla has been secretly cutting her husband's meds so she can cheat with Tyler!

The naked aggression of Tyler Durden still lurks beneath the surface and threatens to overwhelm the steady life that Sebastian has built. Does he have the strength to cage him again? Or could the decade of marriage and parenthood have Sebastian exhausted to the point Tyler has become unstoppable? Will Fight Club rise again? Our money's on yes, yes, yes.

Palahniuk is joined by artist Cameron Stewart and our forecast for this series is a sexy, fun, grossly violent psychological romp chocked with homoerotic themes, space monkeys, support group tourism, and subtext. So pick up a copy – but whatever you do, remember, DON'T talk about it. That's rule number one. ■

[Gravely voice] "I'm batman. I'm fabulous" Remember the days that Bat's fought aliens, jumped sharks and got tied up a lot? No? Before our time too. These genius rainbow vinyls come right from the 50s when Batman said, "I must wear a different coloured costume each night!" ■

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All hail Mohawk! The most evil of Gremlins is getting a retro 8-bit make-under from the vault of classic NES game Gremlins 2. Yes, that was a thing. You know the rules: Don't feed after midnight, don't get wet, don't talk about Fight Club... Wait! Comes with a machine gun accessory. Of course. ■







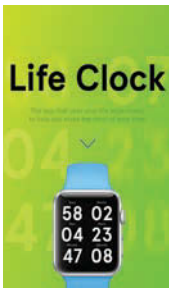
In every generation, there's a vinyl one

What's missing from your life? Hint: It's not a pair of stylish yet affordable boots. This collection assembles the Scooby Gang and some of Sunnydale's misunderstood monsters as you've never seen them. Featuring the familiar faces of the Buffster herself, mild-mannered watcher Giles and witch-in-training Willow, as well as Big Bads Angelus, Drusilla, Spike and The Master! We love the blind boxed format, complete with chase figures – clue: F-A-I-T-H – and the very best thing? No Dawn! A brilliant addition to the Doctor Who and Breaking Bad vinyl lines – check 'em out on Twitter and Instagram. Come on Whedonites, do #WeLoveTITANS? ■





[apps]



Life Clock Really helping the Apple Watch zing into life as an essential new piece of tech, this app COUNTS DOWN THE DAYS TO YOUR DEATH… Extrapolating data from your Health Kit, this doesn't quite claim to be accurate, but it does slap you in the face with your inactivity. Chirpy existentialism! ■



The Noise App Basically an app designed for our editor, The Noise App lets you record whatever is preventing you from getting to sleep so you can forward it on to your council. And with more than 100 UK councils already accepting reports, those parties are practically closing themselves down. ■

Mortal Combat X
Game of the Month

The Mortal Kombat series outraged Middle England with the best of them from the 90s onwards, with some parents deciding that developers making games involving heads being ripped out – spine and all – was the same as telling them to buy them for their children. Well, guess what, those children are now maladjusted grown-ups with disposable incomes and the Mortal Kombat series is back to finish taking their souls. And the current generation of machines can render that button mashing bloodletting in even higher definition. All your favourite characters are back, alongside a new roster of very angry people with particular sets of skills. Things look predictably gorgeous, in a deeply violent kind of way, but time will tell if the hardcore fight fans take to this new breed of beat 'em up. ■

Out now across formats



Dark Souls 2: Scholar of the First Sin From the twisted minds that brought you Bloodborne and Dark Souls comes, urm, Dark Souls 2, now taking its bow on PS4 and Xbox One. Also launching on last-gen platforms, Scholar of the First Sin repackages the original game alongside three pieces of extra content, improved visuals, an increase in online players and new characters. Oh, and it's still bastard hard. ■

Out now across formats



The Order: 1886 The most stunning looking game yet? Possibly. The Order feels like a half-step towards greatness, with an immersive story about an alt-London beset, with rebellion and werewolves, asking players to spend as much time pressing X to advance the story as it does giving you a game to play. The gunplay packs a proper punch when it kicks in, without reinventing things. But more actual game, please! ■

Out now on PS4



WORDS MIKE HIRD

ABOUT TIME

The smartwatch is finally here! Truth be told, it's been here for a while. But just like there was the MP3 player before there was the iPod, the arrival of the Apple Watch marks the advent of most people paying attention – like it or not. But, and we've said this before, Apples are not the only fruit...

01



Apple Watch
Weighing in at between £299 and £13,500 depending on how stupid you are, the Apple Watch should be further turning more and more of us over to the dark overlords in the sky as the Ascension moves forth. Or, it'll connect your wrist to your apps and your phone and quietly take over the world in a slightly less aggressive way. From £299, apple.co.uk ■

02



Samsung Gear S
For those who'd rather eat an apple than wear one, Samsung is king. The Gear S has a curved sAMOLED screen and packs Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and 3G connectivity – as well as a roomy screen. But, you know, NOT APPLE, NOT APPLE. Which is just as annoying a statement as IT'S APPLE, by the way. From around £300, samsung.com ■

03

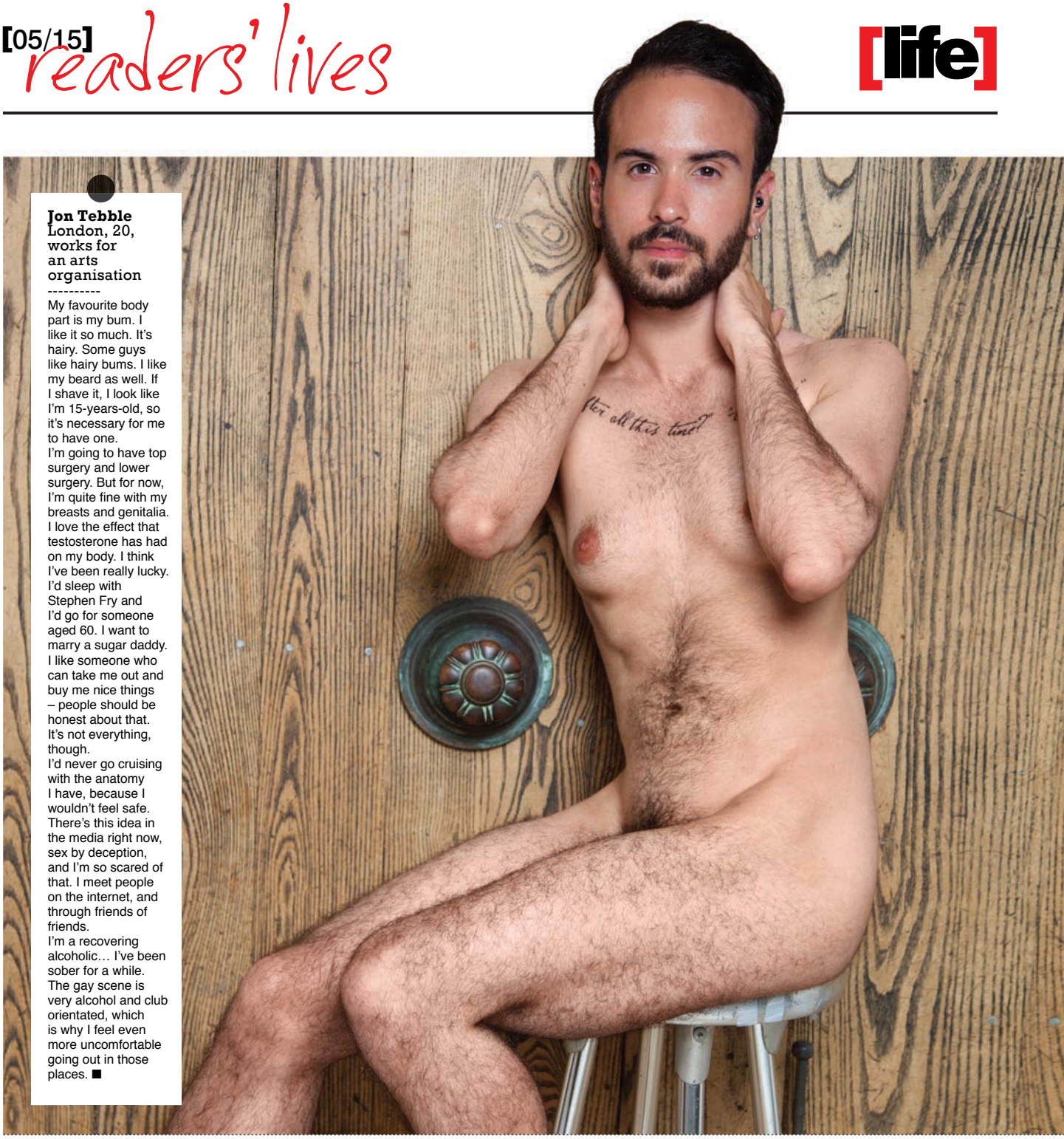


Moto 360
The Moto 360 took the original route of trying to make a smartwatch look like, well, a watch. Powered by Android Wear, this slick looking little thing nevertheless suffers from ropey battery life by comparison to some of its neighbours, and the relative infancy of the operating system. Still, wins on design for plenty of punters. From £199, motorola.com ■


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IMAGE JOE MCCORMICK GROOMING EVAN HUANG USING MAC, SHU UEMERA AND MAKEUP STORE WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH



Jon Tebble
London, 20, works for an arts organisation

My favourite body part is my bum. I like it so much. It's hairy. Some guys like hairy bums. I like my beard as well. If I shave it, I look like I'm 15-years-old, so it's necessary for me to have one.

I'm going to have top surgery and lower surgery. But for now, I'm quite fine with my breasts and genitalia. I love the effect that testosterone has had on my body. I think I've been really lucky.

I'd sleep with Stephen Fry and I'd go for someone aged 60. I want to marry a sugar daddy. I like someone who can take me out and buy me nice things – people should be honest about that. It's not everything, though.

I'd never go cruising with the anatomy I have, because I wouldn't feel safe. There's this idea in the media right now, sex by deception, and I'm so scared of that. I meet people on the internet, and through friends of friends.

I'm a recovering alcoholic… I've been sober for a while. The gay scene is very alcohol and club orientated, which is why I feel even more uncomfortable going out in those places. ■

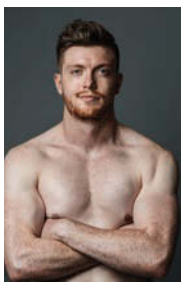
[112]
If the Price is right...
Meet Nathan – the 20-year-old who's spent around £50k to look like his idol Katie Price. ■



[120]
Hitting a bum note
Martin's boyfriend won't have anal sex. What should he do? The Guyliner offers his advice. ■



[126]
A cautionary tale
There's such a thing as hitting the gym too hard. Chris Jones tells us why less CAN be more. ■



At just 20 years old, Nathan Thursfield has already spent close to £50,000 on plastic surgery – and all to look like his idol, Katie Price. Despite Katie herself trying to talk him out of it, Nathan, a retail supervisor from Stoke-on-Trent, has had two nose jobs, botox and lips fillers – and plans a bum lift, liposuction, facelift and a tattoo. In his own words, he tells GT why surgery, and Katie, have changed his life

WORDS JOHN MARRS **IMAGES** ROBERT GERSHINSON



MY FIRST MEMORY OF KATIE Price dates back about seven years when I saw her on a TV documentary. I thought she was pretty cool. I quickly became fascinated by her and wanted to know everything about her. And I loved that she couldn't care less what people thought of her.

I started going to all her signings, I watched her TV programmes, I read every book she wrote and bought just about everything she's ever released – just for the sake of buying it. Even if it's a girl's perfume, I'll buy it and then give it to my mum or my sister.

While I love the way Katie looks, I've always hated my own appearance. I used to hang out with a lot of girls at school and they all thought I was dead good looking, but I just didn't like myself at all. And my lack of confidence in my looks is nothing to do with being bullied or any childhood trauma. I always felt that a man should be masculine, but I feel like I'm feminine. I even debated whether I was really a woman trapped in a man's body and actually wanted a sex change. But no, I'm not. And I no longer think I was born wrong, I'm happy being a big gay.

I hated my nose the most – it was fat, manly and I wanted it to look quite feminine, which it didn't. So 18 months ago, I decided I wanted a nose job – and who better to model my new one on than Katie? I've met Katie in real life many times, so I've seen what her nose looks like in the flesh – and it's perfect! I thought, 'I'm going to have that.'

When I told my family and friends I was going to have plastic surgery to have Katie's nose, everyone tried to talk me out of it. They'd say, 'No, you'll look stupid,' but I did it anyway.

It cost me £6,500 and I paid for it





[REAL LIFE]

by taking out personal loans with interest, so it came to about £9,000 in total. But I had a lot of problems after the operation, like blood clots, I couldn't breathe, it was painful, it affected my voice and the whole experience was just awful.

But once all the bandages came off and the swelling went down, I was disappointed with it. It just didn't look the same as Katie's nose, it just wasn't as feminine and as straight as hers, so in February this year, I paid £5,500 for a second operation. Now it looks pretty much the same as hers. I'm not sure if I'm happy with it yet, though. It's still early days, so if it doesn't look just right, I'll give it a few more weeks then I'll have a third operation.

Some people have commented on it and like it, but others are jealous and say they can't see a difference. I can't wait to show Katie what it looks like.

The first time I met Katie was in 2007 at a calendar signing in London. I queued for 11 hours and by the time I reached the front, I didn't actually say anything to her. I just looked at her, then I started crying and walked off after she signed it. I went on to meet her loads of times at other signings. Then after a couple of years, all of a sudden I knew I had to talk to her. And she'd seen me so many times, she recognised me. She remembered me because I was so brown thanks to my fake tan and she was so overwhelming that I couldn't believe it. I was telling everyone Katie Price knows who I am. She now even follows me on Twitter.

When I told her that I was having surgery to get her nose, she thought I was mad and that I didn't need it doing, and that I was gorgeous as I was. But whatever she does, like her eyebrows or teeth, I do the same. I don't think I'm weird, I just think she looks dead good.

I had a semi permanent tattoo on my eyebrows so they look like hers. I hated my original eyebrows, men's can get dead bushy. I know I'm only 20, but for two years I've been having botox every three months. I don't want to ever have a wrinkle on my face and, when I'm 40, I want to look 20 years younger. I'm not obsessed with botox but I just don't want to get old. Some people like to age gracefully but not me.

People look at my lips rather than my new nose. I get them injected with filler every three months because I have no top lip at all without it. Even though Katie's had all her lip stuff taken out now, I'm going to continue. She's going for the natural look but I prefer her with big lips and big boobs.

The next thing I'm going to have is a bottom lift, where they take fat from around your body, like your back and sides, and inject it into your bum. It gives it a peachy shape, like Katie's. I don't like my bum, I think it's a bit saggy and a lift will help it look better. I know I should just go to the gym and sort it out with exercise, but it's quicker to just have it done by a surgeon.

I really need my teeth doing, too. I hate my teeth – everyone says they're fine, but I want the Hollywood smile, even if it means filing down what I have to put veneers in. Teeth whitening is crap if your teeth don't look perfect in the first place. I know Katie went though hell with her veneers, but it's going to be worth the pain for me.

I'm also going to have a tattoo like Katie has of a garter belt around my thigh. I've been to have one measured up and it'll take about ten hours in the tattooist's chair, but I can't wait. I also want liposuction and in a few years I want a facelift.

Some of my friends think I'm a bit mad and a bit over the top doing all this, and my boyfriend Michael always tries to persuade me not to do it, telling me I don't need this work, to be careful and that I might regret it. So when I have stuff done, he







When I told Katie Price I was having surgery to get her nose, she thought I was mad. I don't think I'm weird, I just think she looks dead good

comes with me so that I don't go over the top. If I went on my own, then I'd ask for more stuff to be injected into my lips and I'd end up looking like a duck. He also knows that if he ever gave me an ultimatum of the surgery or him, I'd pick the surgery.

I still look at photographs of myself and I don't think I'm good looking at all. People have told me I can't see what they do and that maybe I have body dysmorphia – and maybe I have. I don't like it when friends say they think I'm good looking, but then when I meet someone who doesn't say it, I think 'Oh, why haven't they?' It'd probably be cheaper for me to go to therapy than have all this work, but to be honest, I like the fake look and it suits me.

I go to work and make my own money so I can spend it how I want to, and I reckon I've spent close to £50,000 in the last five years on plastic surgery and other work. I even got cash back from my mortgage then went on a massive spending spree and blew the money on having work done.

The gay scene has been dead accepting of me; I'm normal to them and having this work has changed my life. Some GT readers are probably thinking, 'Oh my God what a freak,' but it's made me a lot more confident. I never used to go out, then I start having my lips done and fake tanning, and now I've had my nose done, nothing can stop me from living my life. Those who criticise me on Twitter and online don't know me, so they can go fuck themselves. I'm happy, so nothing else matters! ■

@naththursfield

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'No, Julian,' I sighed, deflated and exasperated. 'You can't strangle me.'

Weirdly enough, it wasn't the first, or even the second time I'd been in a situation like this. There seemed to be something about me, a red-flashing signal I was giving off like a human lighthouse, a five-foot-eight, 167 pound, 48-year-old beacon of need, that attracted only the most damaged, destructive boyfriends and relationships. How else to explain away the third time – in less than a year – that I had hooked up with a guy turned on by the thought of being punched in the face, kicked in the ribs and being choked to the point of unconsciousness?

You wouldn't have known it to look at them. Gerard was the sweetest looking guy, with a soft boyish face and wisp of fuzz over his always grinning, luscious upper lip.

'Hit me,' he said within 15 minutes of meeting me on the uptown train, doing that cruising thing when you look, and he looks back, and you look again.

I should probably say here that as far as I know, Gerard had no idea who I was or what I'd done. Despite reports in the media of people seeking me out in order to celebrate, or who are 'turned on' by my crime, to my knowledge this has never happened. Gerard simply enjoyed being punched in the face.

On the other hand, when he wasn't, you know, begging to be kicked in the guts, Gerard was the softest, most cuddly little teddy bear. I invited him over for pizza and movie night. We sat on the sofa watching Pink Flamingos, arms and legs draped over one another, scratching each others' neck and back.

'It's obviously a self-esteem issue,' I said when my therapist asked why I think that I attract these kinds of guys. 'I seek out only the most damaged and needy.'

I'll say! Julian, the one who wanted to strangle me, ended up being sort of my boyfriend for a few months. And I say 'sort of,' because Julian, I learned later on, already had a boyfriend. An older gentleman who apparently supported Julian, because Julian didn't have a job, he was available all day, everyday, no matter when. I'd go over to his apartment, early in the morning, after his boyfriend would go to work. There were obviously issues between the two of them, who slept in separate rooms.

'I want you to cum on my boyfriend's pillow,' Julian said one afternoon after insisting we have sex on his boyfriend's bed. It was another flashing warning sign

'I want you to cum on my boyfriend's pillow,' Julian said one afternoon after insisting we have sex on his boyfriend's bed. It was another flashing warning sign. I saw something sinister and vindictive in Julian that day.

And yet, I didn't breakup with him.

I have a history of not letting go of relationships, both good and bad. It's all part of the addict mentality of not wanting to let go of anything, even if it's seriously wrong or potentially damaging in some way.

All my friends noticed what was going on.

'You need to get rid of that guy,' my roommate, Ernie, said to me one morning at breakfast after overhearing a phone call from Julian letting me know that the coast would soon be clear.

'He's in the shower,' Julian said conspiratorially, almost laughing. 'He'll be gone in ten minutes.'

The words shocked the hell out of me the second they exited my mouth.

'I'm not what you're looking for,' I said to Julian, literally shaking. 'I think we need to stop seeing each other.'

It was the first time in my life I'd ended a relationship with a guy I was attracted to, had deep feelings for, but knew was dishonest and unhealthy. The first time I realised I could be happy on my own, without having someone else in my life. A simple concept, really, for most people. But for me, it was a breakthrough. Yet another milestone. ■

@alig_aligula

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PUBLISHER OF PINKNEWS [benjamin cohen]



The PinkNews Debate, held just before Parliament was dissolved for the General Election, was unlike any LGBT election debate I've ever been to before. With the exception of the host and, rather bizarrely, the UKIP representative Peter Whittle, all of the panelists were straight.

When we picked our panel, which also included the Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, the Conservative Cabinet minister and Leader of the House of Lords Baroness Tina Stowell, the Lib Dem Chief Whip Don Foster and the Green Party leader Natalie Bennett, we wanted to demonstrate that LGBT issues are relevant to a wide cross section of politicians and the electorate. We also wanted to clearly state that LGBT voters will decide which party to back on a range of issues from the economy to gay rights. It was also to demonstrate something else – the importance of allies.

At the debate, the panel were addressed via a Google Hangout by a brilliant straight ally, Virgin founder Sir Richard Branson. Back when homosexuality became legal and long before the founding of charities like Stonewall, Sir Richard launched the Student Advisory Centre, which helped many young people in the process of coming out. Now, he's calling on politicians to ensure that sex and relationship education begins in an early age in ALL schools, in order to tackle what he described as the 'menace' of homophobic and transphobic bullying. His question prompted Yvette Cooper to launch into a passionate attack at the Coalition for dragging its feet at making these lessons compulsory in primary schools.

Yvette has been a long-term friend and ally of the LGBT community, but the reason that she cares so much about this issue is that she's a mum. She and her husband, Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls, have children now in secondary school – and both have talked about the importance of tackling homophobia in schools, not just for the children who're there, but for the positive impact on society in general.

Sir Richard backs diversity and inclusion because it's the thing to do, but also because it makes business sense.

Allies are clearly important in our battle for rights and acceptance. Very few of the advances in equality in this country would've been possible without strong straight allies. These range from the brave MPs who voted to make it legal to be gay in England and Wales in 1967, despite strong opposition among their own parliamentary colleagues, through to the the rainbow coalition of David Cameron, Nick Clegg, Ed Miliband and Alex Salmond, who by working together, on this one issue, ensured same-sex marriage was introduced in England, Wales and Scotland last year.

Just as we've benefited from strong straight allies, it's in my view that we ourselves should become allies for other oppressed groups

Just as we've benefited from strong straight allies, it's in my view that we ourselves should become allies for other oppressed groups. On this, I'm particularly thinking of those who're trans or wish to conform to no gender at all. While some gay people are puzzled by the inclusion of T in the LGBT acronym, it makes sense because we're all allies.

Just like gay people, trans people have to come to terms with an identity that defies traditional expectations and have to go through the incredibly stressful process of coming out to their family and friends. It's much worse though, YouGov polling for PinkNews has found that you're twice as likely to be rejected by your parents if you're trans than if you're gay. These figures will only be tackled through education and, of course, us all working together to fight for equality and acceptance in wider society.

Fighting for trans rights will help gay men too in our battle for acceptance, just like ensuring that Virgin is a diverse and inclusive employer helps Sir Richard Branson to make more money. ■

@benjamincohen



My boyfriend won't have anal sex – should I leave him?

I'm 33, my partner is 29. We've been together ten years. I love him to bits but our relationship is sexless, aside from some mutual masturbation or oral every now and again. It's been like this for the last few years.

He doesn't like anal – either giving or receiving. I've tried everything to make it more pleasurable for him, but he's not interested. This isn't about sexual attraction – he just doesn't like it.

The concept of an open relationship doesn't appeal to him. I've talked to him about it, but he's happy with the situation as it is, so doesn't put much effort in to try and change. I've even bluntly told him he needs to 'put out' or I'll end up having an affair.

I recently met someone else I really like and the sex is great. He's very sexual – it makes such a change from being constantly rebuffed. I don't love him yet, but we're heading in that direction.

I feel like a complete bastard. I love my partner and don't want to hurt him, but I can't spend the rest of my life effectively celibate – I'm 33, not 93!

My partner is very emotionally and financially dependent on me and splitting would destroy him, but I don't see a solution that will satisfy us both. Martin, via e-mail

The Guyliner replies I think if you'd written to me a few months ago, before you'd embarked on a relationship with someone else, I'd probably have said you need to work on it, get some counselling. What's quite telling is that while you say you're not yet in love with the guy you're seeing on the side, you think it might be heading that way. Of course, it's possible to love two people at the same time, but this suggests to me that the disconnect from your long-term partner has already begun. You still love him, of course, and have tried to accommodate his different sexual desires – or lack thereof – but it seems you are only staying with him because you think you should. Ten years is a long time, and it's great you got together so young and are still together, but there's no long-service medal for staying in a relationship that, for whatever reason, isn't fulfilling your needs any longer.

You could try asking why your boyfriend doesn't like anal sex. For him not to like either method suggests there's something deeper going on. Has he always avoided anal sex or has this evolved over time? "I don't like it" doesn't tell you much, but I imagine you don't press the issue. Nobody wants to feel like a bully when it comes to sex. The bottom line – pardon the pun – is that it's important to be happy in a relationship, and you don't sound it. You have sought comfort elsewhere and it appears this is fulfilling not only your sexual needs, but your emotional ones too. You can't stay with somebody just because they depend on you; the relationship has shifted into an almost parental state.

It sounds like you've exhausted every avenue. If sex really is that important to you, then the best thing to do is to move on, or you run the risk of becoming a nag about it to your boyfriend and, worse, hurting him should he discover your affairs. If you really can't leave your boyfriend, consider couples' counselling, or resign yourself to the fact that sex is going to have to take a back seat. ■

@theguyliner

need advice?

Need some good old-fashioned advice on matters of love, life or relationships? Email me in total confidence on theguyliner@gaytimes.co.uk. I can't respond individually and your emails may be edited for use in the magazine. We won't use your real name or publish any contact details.

WORDS THE GUYLINER IMAGES ISTOCKPHOTO



ALL THE MEN YOU SHOULD NEVER DATE

[01] The Class Tourist

It's amazing who you meet when you're out drinking a badly made mojito out of a jam jar. Thanks to the uniforms of our various tribes, be it skinny jeans and a hat or a t-shirt so tight your nipples are taking you to a tribunal, you never know whether you're standing next to a bricklayer or a minor royal. Except, of course you do – once they open their mouths. An accent is a dead giveaway. The Class Tourist uses accents like some of us use cockrings or leathers – they're his fetish.

Whether he's the aristo with a penchant for a bit of rough, or a working-class hero with a lust for lords, the Class Tourist is only interested in you because of who you aren't, not who you are. Watch the snooty one squeal with delight as you serve him fish fingers and chips for his 'tea'! And is that an actual pint of bitter? Gosh! His lesser-moneyed equivalent will enjoy being the bit of trade at a weak-chinned 'supper' and being told he "scrubs up" well.

But what happens when the novelty wears off and things move into relationship mode? Your friends' early enthusiasm quickly evaporates when he screams "Goal!" in a cut-glass accent at a football match. And, sorry posh boys, while your mother may be over you being gay, it doesn't mean she's ready to hand you over to someone who doesn't know what a drawing room is.

The solution There's only one thing that can possibly make you level. Yes, that great equaliser – drag. Either that, or run away together and live in a Barratt house and spend your days polishing your Mondeo – comfortably, eternally middle-of-the-road. ■

[02] The Lazy Shag

Is there anything worse than getting so carried away in the attraction to somebody, only to later realise that they're the dreariest shag you've ever had in your entire life? It's not that they can't do it when they feel like it – it's just that they don't care about anything other than their own ejaculation.

"How was it for you darling?" never even crosses his lips, because he's not interested in what you felt. Once he's endured the foreplay you insist upon before your trackie bottoms slip to the floor, he'll take you in hand for as long as it takes for him to get to where he needs to be. If you're lucky, he'll finish you off, but more often than not, he'll leave you with a lump, and not just in your throat. The kind of lump that only a trip to the bathroom with your David Beckham calendar can fix.

The Lazy Shag is usually the better-looking half of a couple. Being the hotter one, he's never really had to try that hard between the sheets – and he certainly doesn't see any reason to start now. By his reckoning, you should be HONOURED he's letting you get your hands on his goods, and as for "being there" for you, well, what more do you want, exactly? Everything is express, an absolute masterpiece in instant gratification – well, for him, at least.

The solution There's a hard and fast rule when it comes to doing the nasty – be hard, not fast. You can gamely delay his gratification if you feel you're up to it, meaning he'll have no choice but to make sure you're having a good time too. ■

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BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

[positive luke]

IMAGE LIAM WYCHERLEY



Body image seems to surround us all on a daily basis; whenever we look at a magazine, drool over the sexy aftershave adverts on our TVs, even when we hook-up with someone on a night out – it's really not uncommon to subconsciously analyse what we see in front of us, reality or fantasy, to our own conceptions of the 'ideal' body. This has been known for decades, but does this high regard of flawless body-image affect LGBT people in a slightly different way, or is the issue causing a similar level of stress among straight people? I write this as a gay man who's 5ft8 and slim; some may use the word 'skinny' – depending on their interpretations of 'low-muscle tone guys' and what derogatory label should be dished out accordingly.

I feel sad that the gay community, in my eyes, has a very narrow mind when it comes to the perfect body; I've often been told I need to go and grab myself a protein shake and hit the gym in order to 'match the body I would gain to the face that I have.' Yes, seriously. But as a young gym-phobic man with little time to build my Adonis temple, it's a sad fact that I'll intentionally buy jackets with more padding in the shoulders, to hopefully hide the skeletal structure I was given.

The rise of social media also seems to be a culprit as it becomes increasingly apparent how often labels, based on body type, are dished out. Even Grindr wants me to select a 'tribe' to tell everyone 'what I am.' At first, it'd appear I should be a twink, but as soon as my chest hair peeps-out of a low cut t-shirt I seem to transform into something called a 'cub.' Why do I have to be anything?

Body perception is now becoming such an integrated part of the gay man's idiolect that everyone is assigned these labels, and as an accomplice to this judgment, phrases such as 'no bears' or 'no twinks' are sadly now as common on Grindr as our names. Even my lesbian friends feel that their body type is usually synonymous with a label of some sort. Fat means butch, skinny means fem.

I can't even imagine how difficult it'd be to be a larger gay man. With so much pressure to conform to what's expected through our sexualised society, they have to endure feeling pushed out of a crowd that, historically, was our only crowd to belong to.

What remains under clothing has always been a bonus in my book. Maybe it's time we stopped adhering to the hyper-sexualised world of perfection

@positiveluke

I'd be a liar if I said I wasn't annoyed when I meet a guy who never seems to work out, but holds onto an attractive 'V' shape torso that seems to look brilliant in practically every item of clothing; usually thanks to a combination of fat-burning genes and broad bones. An 'attractive' body will always remain appealing to us, but I often take great pride in telling friends that not one of my ex-partners ever had six-pack abs. I always seem to base my opinions of attractiveness on a warm smile, a kind heart and even a charismatic charm.

What remains under clothing has always been a bonus in my book, and as a community that has endured so many stereotypes throughout the years, maybe it's time we stopped adhering to the hypersexualised world of perfection and start to focus on the stereotypes we have for one another; for a body that's 6ft2 and packed with muscle may not always have the personality we'll find the most attractive.

It's now time we lost the unworthy connection we hold onto; that gay men have to look and act in a particular way in order to be considered attractive. We're only human after all, and if I have to wait for the day I have less essays to write for my studies, and more time to work on my physical health, then so be it.

Our quest for the perfect body in our partners and in ourselves is a quest we'll always fail in, because the 'perfect body', or even the 'perfect partner' will always be an obstacle that we forever envy overcoming.

I think it's time we realised that a 'perfect anything' never really existed in the first place.■



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WHAT A MIGHTY GOOD MAN [pj brennan]



'So, I'd like you to fix your hair, your teeth, get muscular and get tan,' she said.

'But you said you liked the Robert Pattinson Twilight look I had,' I replied.

'I know, but now I think you look sickly,' she sighed, exasperated. 'And lower your speaking voice, you're not convincing anyone.'

I'd been in LA for a few weeks at that point, but that conversation with a potential manager was the most LA thing that had happened to me so far. It was around this time last year, or as a certain miserable portion of television creatives call it, 'pilot season.' For a couple of days afterwards, I stayed in LA and took her advice seriously. Those were simple enough tasks, right? Just basically change everything about myself, including my speaking voice.

I finally came to my senses – if LA didn't want me the way I was, then I didn't want LA. I got my pasty ass back on a plane to New York City, the concrete jungle and yada yada yada.

More recently, I've been taking an acting class specifically designed for LGBT students with a teacher named Brad Calcaterra. The class roll covers the queer spectrum and it's kind of the opposite of that meeting in LA. That lady would've had a field day with my classmates, but that's why they're amazing. The class mostly explores all the internalised blocks we've set up to prevent us from delivering a truthful and embodied performance. So we cry and scream and laugh a lot, and it feels kind of frenetic, but it also feels alive and perfect.

A few weeks ago, Russell Tovey talked about masculinity in the context of his career. It's important to highlight that it was in regards to his job as an actor, because I sadly understood what he was saying. He's in a rare position of being cast as both gay and straight, a status few homos are allowed.

I'll tell you an embarrassing story. Years back, while I was still in drama school, I ran into him at a club. I told him he was my inspiration for many years for that very reason and I hoped to one day convincingly play both gay and straight. Luckily I didn't tell him I loved him, like I'd originally planned. He shook my hand and politely wished me a good night, and for these past five years I've broken my back trying to achieve that goal.

Russell Tovey and my dad would probably have a similar idea of what being a man is. And that's fine. But it doesn't mean it's right, and it's certainly not mine

But now I'm tired of it. My gold standard for acting, or even life, shouldn't be to convincingly play straight. The minute I think like that is the minute I'm buying into someone else's version of what I should be. When I came out as gay, my dad sincerely told me he was scared for me and that maybe if I 'dressed less gay' I'd be safer out there. Russell and my dad would probably have a pretty similar idea of what being a man is. And that's fine. But it doesn't necessarily mean it's right, and it's certainly not mine.

A lot of us are falling for it though, huh? I see countless guys on Instagram letting me know they hit the gym for the fifth day in a row. And I'll be honest; I still look at my body and don't like it. The big beefy dudes seem to be having all the sex, going to the best parties and basically living life like it's golden. Question: Where does all their money come from?!

Here's my issue, in a nutshell: We've spent years internally abusing ourselves for not conforming, and now, with acceptance, we aren't dismantling those fears, we're threading them into the fabric of our culture.

It's hard to separate from what I once thought of myself, hard not to hate myself since I've done it for so long, that's for damn sure, but for inspiration, I go back to that Vine of the little girl sipping a cup of tea and saying, 'I don't care if you don't like me, I loooove me.' And then she winks.

I love that wink. Stay real, young lady, I will too. Wink. ■

@peejaybrennan



WORDS CHRIS JONES IMAGES SNOOTY FOX IMAGES

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

need advice?

Whether you're wanting to look good on the beach, shed a few pounds or just live a healthier lifestyle, email me on fitness@gaytimes.co.uk or tweet me at @ChrisJonesGeek. I can't respond to everyone and your emails or tweets may be edited for use in the magazine. We won't publish any contact details.

I am injured. Not exactly the most inspiring opening to a fitness column but please do bear with me.

The beginning of 2015 has been, what can I say, unkind to me. I embarked, like many do, on a serious health kick. My diet was good, I had cut down on alcohol and I was visiting the gym three to four times a week. My sessions included weight training and the odd cardio session thrown in. I knew what worked for my body and I was happy with the progress. I started to notice the results I wanted – and within a short time, too. I'd done this sort of kick before, but never had I noticed my body changing in such a way. I was getting a six-pack, my chest was toning up and my thighs were killer. But then...

One Sunday afternoon, I'd worked on my back and triceps at the gym. I left feeling accomplished and content with my workout. All in all, fine. Later that evening I bemoaned a slight pain in the small of my back. A case of 'over doing it' and a minor pull, I figured. I took some painkillers and thought nothing of it.

I awoke Monday morning at 3am to the most intense pain I've ever had. It spanned from my lower back, all up my right side and into my chest. I was unable to breathe properly and it scared the shit out of me. An ambulance ride later and a 'going over' in A&E revealed I had suffered a musculoskeletal tear in my side. This is a tear to the system that's responsible for moving the skeletal system. So safe to say this was serious.

For a week I suffered muscle spasms that incapacitated me. I was off work and I couldn't move much. I was not getting much sleep due to the pain – and the sleep I did get was just awful. As the spasms decreased, I noticed a sudden swelling and discolour in my right arm. I was rushed, again, to hospital were a blood clot had developed in my arm. The staff there were great and the worry was, 'has this clot spread anywhere.' It had. To my right lung.

I'm now on a six month treatment plan for this and it has impacted my life, at the age of 28, more than I thought it could. All because I didn't listen to my body, and didn't prepare well for a workout.

This is a cautionary tale. Be prepared, please. And don't rush into any exercise plan without realistically assessing your abilities and potential. ■



Bodybuilding Warehouse Protein Pancakes. These were brilliant on pancake day, and took ALL the guilt away. Bodybuilding Warehouse Premium Protein Pancakes (£8.99 for 500g) contain 22g of protein and 19g of low GI slow-burning carbohydrates per serving, which can reduce the need to snack. They're available in banana caramel, chocolate orange and lemon zest. ■



[ask chris]

Question I've been offered steroids by some of my friends. I've always wanted to be bigger but I'm scared of the health risks. What should I do? – Simon, via e-mail.

Answer I don't know if you read my column a few months back on steroids. They're more common than people think – and that's not a, "Yes, take them" at all. I can't preach, but just asking whether to take what's essentially an illegal drug is a way of already saying, "I know this is pretty dumb." ■

Chris' exercise of the month

Squats

I've discussed squats before and how bloody brilliant they are for your thighs, and making that butt pert. You can perform these at home, using just body weight. I'd recommend doing ten reps of four to begin with...

[01] Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands stretched out in front for extra stability.

---

[02] Lower yourself slowly down by bending your knees until they are almost at a right angle with your thighs parallel to the floor.

---

[03] Keep your back straight and tummy in while you 'go down' – and don't let your knees extend over your toes.





James Anderson

England's No.1 wicket taker of all time*

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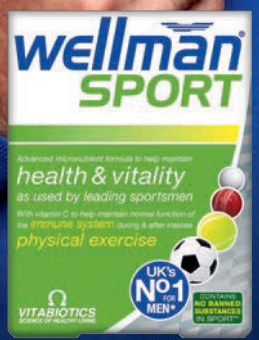
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ADWELCONJAP 27-01-15E

After countless days, months and maybe even years searching, you've finally found your dream home. Hell, you've even imagined where you'd place your furniture and decided which colour to paint the bedroom. But how do you make sure you bag the place without blowing the bank? Here's a few tips – and we'll even teach you what 'gazumping' is...

WORDS SIAN MCLEOD



[01] Lie Yes, yes, lying is bad. We know. But your estate agent and the seller want you to spend as much money as possible, and will probably show you properties WAY over your budget. You, on the other hand, want to get a new home for the best possible price. So if you play your cards close to your chest, lie about your budget – just a little bit – and be firm about how much you're willing to spend, you might be able to get an absolute steal. Saves you a few extra quid for a massive housewarming party.

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[02] Start low Estate agents have to pass on any offer to the seller – no matter how ridiculous. So start by offering below the asking price. Not too far below, though, or they'll think you're taking the piss and won't want to accept anything from you. But low enough so you can always up the offer a bit later if they don't accept. Just don't bother blowing all your money on a price you could've negotiated – you don't want to start life in your new home filled with regret.

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[03] Research Find out everything you can about the house, area and even the seller. We're not saying you should go rooting through his bins, but if the property has mould or dodgy flooring, you could shave some much-needed pounds off the asking price. Find out what other properties in the area are going for, too. You could be getting a bargain, or you could be getting completely ripped off.

---

[04] Be available Being a first time buyer can work to your advantage. Even though you most likely know nothing about owning a house, you have no ties to another property which could lead to complications. If you already own a house, though, make sure it's on the market before you start putting offers in on other properties. Being available makes you very attractive – when doesn't it? – to anyone wanting to sell fast, so make sure your estate agent knows your situation and can pass this on to the seller.

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[05] Be cool Don't get too excited before you've signed and exchanged contracts! If the seller knows you love the place, they'll know they can probably get more money out of you – and you never know what they're doing while you're not looking. 'Gazumped' is estate agentese for 'the seller screwed you over after accepting your offer by taking a higher offer from someone else,' and there's nothing you can do about it unless you want to up your own offer. Make sure you ask the seller to take the place off the market and get all the legal stuff done ASAP, so you don't end up losing a whole lot of money! ■


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A film by ROBIN CAMPILLO, writer of Palme d'Or winner 'THE CLASS'
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THE TIMES
★★★★
"IMPRESSIVE SUSPENSEFUL"
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IMAGE MEGAN TAYLOR

[life] column

SUSTAINABLE AND SEXY INTERIORS

[2 lovely gays]



Our hunt for hot interiors sets us off down unexpected paths. Last year we bumped into one of our TV design heroes, the very dashing Oliver Heath, now an expert in sustainable design. Not only handsome and charming, but his passion for the environment got us thinking. Can interiors be sustainable and still be sexy?

We begin with a trip to the legendary Renaissance London to meet owner, Owen, rock god of reclamation. His fireplaces and lights are beyond glamorous. His own home, we find out as he invites us upstairs, is a sexy man-pad filled with the very best in architectural antiques. Renaissance, we salute you. Watch this space to see what we do with the chandelier!

And if we're talking lighting, Buster and Punch have spent two years developing their new LED Buster Bulb, revolutionising the traditional Edison bulb to make eco light bulbs sexy for the first time.

Good with wood, on the furniture side of things, is pioneer, Seb Cox – not only a master craftsman, but passionate about nature and our impact on it. His Underwood collection is the first of its kind to come with carbon footprint credentials. His latest project aims to create a giant experiential sculpture that has a carbon footprint smaller than an iPhone 6. Good luck with that Seb. We know you won't need it.

As for us, in between client projects and renovating our new house, we couldn't resist the #PimpMyFrench charity challenge. In line with our new found love for all things sustainable, we were asked by Out There Interiors to take a shabby piece of faux French furniture – a storage bench – and 'pimp' it. How could we resist? We got together with designer/metalwork artist, Primary Grey, using scrap from his workshop to create our finished design. Sustainability, it seems, can be fun AS WELL as sexy. ■


[01]


[02]


[03]

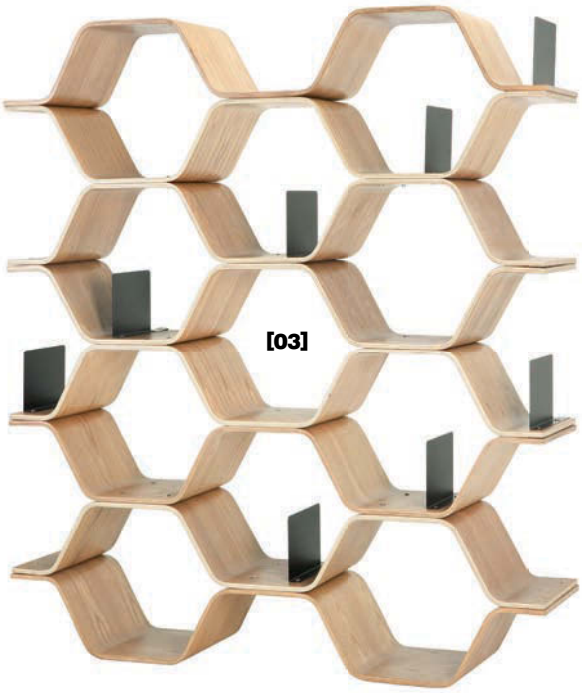

[04]

01 Buster Bulb, £39.99, busterandpunch.com
02 #PimpMyFrench bench, Designed by 2lovelygays in collaboration with Primary Grey for Out There Interiors
03 Crown Candelabra, from £35, sebastiancox.co.uk
04 Architectural salvage, renaissanceLondon.com

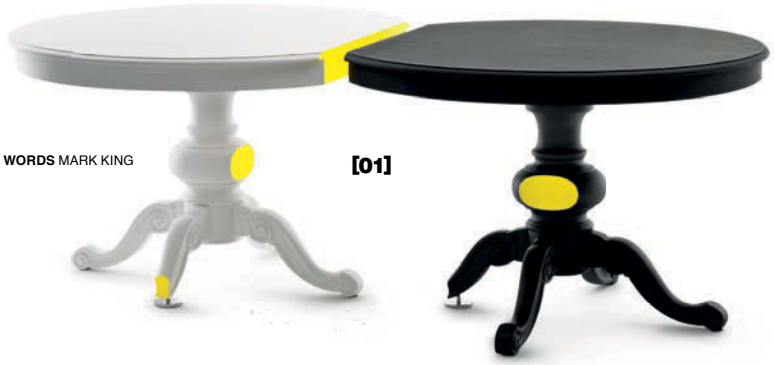
The trend for new design inspired by shapes of the past continues. The look is still contemporary and clean – for those of you worried about a chintz revival and – yes, the 80s counts as retro now too



[02]



[03]



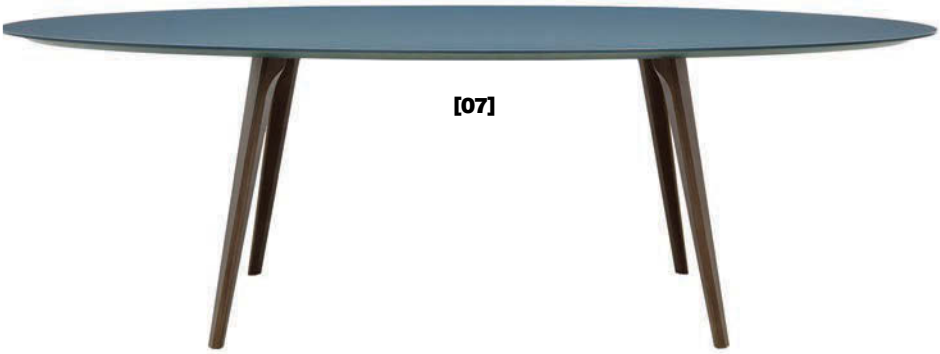
WORDS MARK KING

[01]

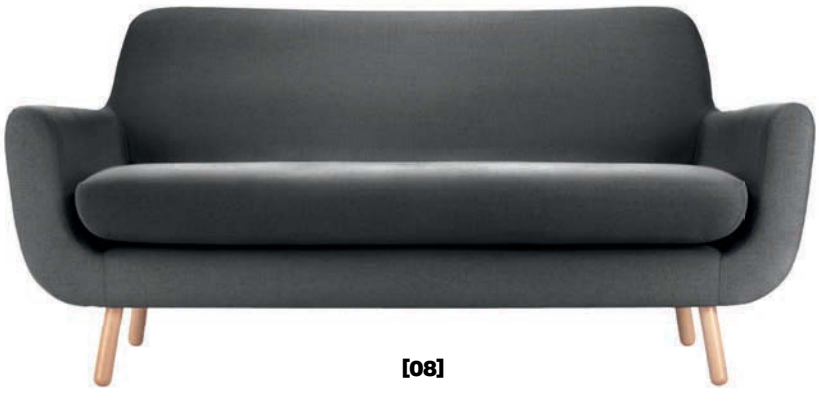
NEW RETRO



[06]



[07]



[08]



[04]



[05]



[09]



[10]

01
The dining tables
Traditional French elegance sharpened with sliced neon highlights. Eye-catching detail that allows pieces to be pushed together. Mogg Chez Philippe dining tables, £3,300, gomodern.co.uk

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02
The pendant
Sleek chrome pendant that evokes the chic dinner parties of the 70s. Fondue anyone? Boule Pendant Light Chrome, £59, made.com

---

03
The display storage
Hints of 60s and 70s pattern made contemporary by light ash. Perfect as a set-piece space divider. Polygon shelving unit, £299, made.com

---

04
The club armchair
Bold, mid-century comfort perfect for late-night, Mad Men-inspired whiskey and cigar alone time. BLOC Club, £595, hopperandspace.com

---

05
The glass table
Timeless combination of wood and glass, stylish enough to be in a coffee table book. Juwel coffee table by TEAM 7, £1,181, wharfside.co.uk

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06
The bistro chair
A twist on the classic, brought up-to-date with matt grey plastic. Parki Grey Chair, £50, habitat.co.uk

---

07
The oval table
Smooth 50s elegance in a sociable oval shape with room for ten. Argo dining table, £1,490, gomodern.co.uk

---

08
The snuggling sofa
Welcoming mid-century curves. Both simple and comfortable. Jonah three-seater sofa, £599, made.com

---

09
The pop art
Luscious plastic pop statement armchair that's in the permanent collection of the V&A. RM58 classic armchair, £645, limelace.co.uk

---

10
The perfect host
High-end reinvention of the hostess trolley freshened by Nordic attention to detail. Danish serving trolley, £1,500, wharfside.co.uk

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In the 80s, Ikea famously told us to "chuck out your chintz" and were pioneers in bringing sharp modern design to the masses. Retro experts Hopper and Space search high and low for originals and tell us about the appeal of early Ikea

"Some 80s Ikea pieces have built up a cult following in recent years – and with their sharp minimal style, it isn't hard to see why.

Reputable Scandinavian designers were employed to come up with super stylish yet inexpensive pieces. Although mass produced for a throwaway market, a handful of these designs have stood the test of time and, for us, are as fresh and relevant today.

Produced in their millions and casually discarded over the years, good examples are incredibly tricky to track down.

We adore the work of Niels Gammelgaard, who was inspired by a visit to a supermarket trolley factory and used the same technology in his designs. Our favourites of his are the OTI chair, above, and the basket-style Järpen chair. Both have crisp, linear designs and are a great way to add a bit of 80s cool. ■"



Original OTI and Järpen chairs, £375 each, hopperandspace.com. As with all individual collectables it's first-come first-served. Check back with Hopper and Space for information on new finds.

We like big bundts...



EDD KIMBER IS THE BOY WHO BAKES

I wonder how many of you have been body shamed? Been made to feel ashamed for not having the perfect body or having a six-pack? When I was 19, I weighed almost 20 stone and became used to a fair amount of verbal abuse! I lost the weight before I turned 21. But, lets be honest, I work with cake seven days a week, I'm not skinny by any stretch of the imagination and to some people that makes it acceptable to look down on me. It's only been with time that I realised I couldn't care less what other people thought and that I'm happy in my own skin so, unashamedly, this recipe is definitely not diet-friendly or low carb. It IS, however, bloody delicious. And, as I like to remind myself, a little bit of what you fancy does you good!



Chocolate Bundt with Bourbon Butterscotch

Chocolate Bundt

250g unsalted butter
200ml buttermilk
80g cocoa powder
400g light brown sugar
4 large eggs
350g plain flour
1 1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda

Bourbon Butterscotch Glaze

150g light brown sugar
150ml double cream
100g unsalted butter
Large pinch of flaked sea salt
100ml bourbon
1 tsp vanilla bean paste

To make the cake, preheat the oven to 180° (160° fan), grease a large bundt tin with oil and dust with cocoa powder, tapping out any excess. Set the tin onto a baking tray and put aside. To make the cake batter, place the butter into a saucepan and cook over medium heat until melted, remove from the heat and add the buttermilk and the cocoa powder, whisking until smooth. Pour this mixture into a large bowl and add the sugar and eggs – again, whisking until smooth. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour and bicarbonate of soda. Add the dry ingredients to the wet and, briefly but thoroughly, whisk together to form a smooth cake batter. Pour this into the prepared pan and bake in the preheated oven for 40-45 minutes – or until a skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean. Allow the cake to cool in the pan for five minutes before carefully inverting onto a wire rack to cool completely. To make the butterscotch, place the sugar, cream and butter into a large saucepan and – over medium/high heat – cook for about five minutes before adding the remaining ingredients, and cooking for another two-three minutes, or until you have a smooth caramel. Set aside until the cake has cooled and the butterscotch has thickened to a custard like consistency. To finish, pour the butterscotch all over the cake. Kept covered this will keep for about four days. ■

Author of The Boy Who Bakes, Say It With Cake and Patisserie Made Simple, @theboywhobakes



Eat, drink and be healthy!

How many times have you been told that breakfast is the most important meal of the day? But who has the time to make avocado and scrambled eggs every morning? Well, now there's NOSH Super Brekkie to shake up your morning. Convenient, healthy and made from quinoa, yoghurt and real fruit – so it's tasty, too. Now there's really no excuse. On sale in Tesco and Holland & Barratt stores nationwide priced £2.50, noshdrinks.com ■

...and keeping with the healthy bodies theme, we're also keen on new drink range Jools. So named as the drinks have delicate, kelp-based pearls – called jools – nestled at the bottom of the bottle, filled with essential vitamins and nutrients. Available in apple, cranberry and mango green tea. In stores nationwide priced £1.99 ■





Sunny Spelt Pizzas
Serves 6-10

650g strong white flour
300g spelt flour
10g fast-action, dried yeast
75ml rapeseed oil
500-550ml water
Toppings and sauce of your choice

Sometimes summer creeps up in mysterious ways and teases you with a taster of brighter days to come. Sometimes it also disappoints and feels as brutal as winter… Go figure. No matter which warm month, everyone wants to eat a bit lighter and take advantage of the bounty of fresh ingredients at your disposal once spring segues into summer.

One of our favourite – and most frugal – recipes is spelt pizza. Great for a group, this dough works a treat – it freezes and defrosts effortlessly and can equally be enjoyed cold on an al fresco picnic or blazingly hot straight from the oven, enjoyed at the table. We love to make more elongated, rectangular-shaped pizzas rather than one big round, but it's completely up to you how you shape.

Weigh out everything but the wet ingredients in a large mixing bowl, making sure to keep the yeast and salt at opposite ends. Add the oil and then begin to add the water, swirling your hand in the mixture to incorporate everything. Keep adding water until you've got sticky but workable dough. Tip out onto the work surface and begin to knead. Stretch and elongate the dough to strengthen the gluten. Work for a good 10-15 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic, but you can use a stand mixer if you have one and use the time to get some spritz cocktails on the go! Prove for about 30 minutes.

Next, divide into eight. At this point you can put the dough into sandwich bags and freeze or pop into the fridge, and you can do this two to three days before the occasion. Flavour in dough develops with time.

When ready to bake, preheat the oven to as hot as possible with a large, flat, heavy tray or stone. Take out the portions of dough you need and dust the work surface with a mix of flour and polenta. Stretch, or roll, your dough slowly and carefully as you ease it into shape. It will feel light, thin and stretched but will hold its shape if teased out correctly.

When to size, place the dough into the flour and polenta and begin to add your sauce and toppings. The best thing about pizzas is they can satisfy the most adventurous and the most cautious eater in the same sitting, so get people involved and allow them to top with whatever they like.

Quickly take out the sheet, put the pizza on and bake for 12-18 minutes, until crisp and dry on the edges, with the topping melted and crisp in the middle. Serve hot. We like to drizzle some chilli-infused honey and freshly ground black pepper. ■

Gastro Gays are Patrick Hanlon and Russell Alford. For more visit gastrogays.com, @gastrogays



Eat it up! Meet Flint, the Worry Eater. He's a helpful cuddly toy designed to take the weight of the world off your kids' shoulders. Simply get your loved ones to write or draw their problems, and then just pop them in his mouth so he can eat 'em up. If Flint – a swashbuckling pirate, no less – doesn't do it for you, then you can have his stripy-haired equivalent Saggo instead. Actually, this might be a good gift for dads, too... Available from £19.95, prezzy.com



HOW TO SAY "I DO" WITH CHILDREN AROUND

With more same-sex couples walking down the aisle, or converting their civil partnerships, one of the main stumbling blocks is children. Do we, or do we not, invite them? It's up to you and your partner. Kristen Harding, childcare expert at tiniescreches.com, shares her top tips for having kids attend your special day.

[01] Attention span
Children have short attention spans and need to be kept busy. Having to sit through two hours of speeches is pushing your luck. We suggest you include them in specific parts of the day, providing them with break time and space.

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[02] Safety We know health and safety can go too far, but in the interest of limiting disaster and maintaining your beautiful venue, think about the heights of your decorations if there are toddlers about. Whether it's flower arrangements to trip over or wisps of fabric to pull down, keep things out of reach.

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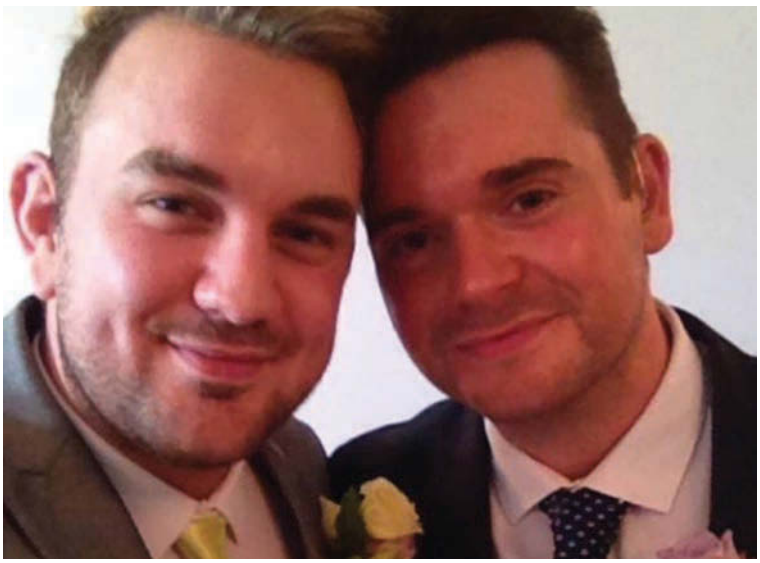
[03] Meal time
When it comes to food – go simple. Some children will eat a posh salmon steak and sautéed potatoes in an agave and pesto sauce; but most will turn up their noses in disgust. Have simple choices for children and don't expect them to eat the same thing as the adults. Having said that, avoid sauces. Nothing ruins a fancy dress faster than brightly coloured condiments. Plus, think about your seating arrangements – while it can be nice to have all the children together, it's also likely they'll be too loud and more mischievous together. Don't forget to have a supervisor for the children during mealtimes. Be this Uncle Jo or some hired help.

---

[04] Entertainment
There'll always be a time during the day when children need entertaining. You might decide to do this yourself, or consult help to handle it for you. It's a really good tip to have a space the children can go to – perhaps a separate room or a special part of the marquee. Having a variety of activities for different age groups is important, as is making sure the children are safely supervised. Why not try fancy dress, or supply some children's books and magazine? Or for the really adventurous – a good ol' fashioned scavenger hunt. ■



WORDS ALISON KYLE



JOE & REECE ROAD TO ADOPTION

We met each other in 2008 and after seven years together, and opening up our own business Vintage Street Cornwall, we decided we were ready to apply for adoption.

We had so many fears and worries about adoption because of the haunting stories and our own bad experiences in our childhood. The last thing we wanted was for this to affect our chances. But, after enquiring, they set our minds at ease and arranged a home visit.

The first meeting was to give an idea of who we were and our reasons for wanting to adopt. We were asked questions about our backgrounds from birth until now and, after talking about our childhoods, she said that we haven't said anything that would stop us entering adoption and that everyone had a past. We were so relieved. This first meeting took around three hours, the time flew by.

We later got a call to say we'd successfully been entered onto stage one of the adoption process and we'd been placed on an induction training day for the following week. The feeling of calling our families to tell them we'd been entered into stage one of adoption was just amazing.

The following week we attended the adoption training day and the experience was overwhelming. We learned a whole range of subjects, met other potential adopters and even watched a DVD of children awaiting adoption which made the whole experience very real to us.

After gathering our references and medicals, we're now waiting to see if we've been successful in entering stage two of the process – the final stage. Stage one has taken us two months and the final stage is said to take a further four months, Then, it's just the matching.

Our advice for anyone wanting to adopt or foster is to just pick up the phone and make the first call. Social workers are fantastic and the support is even better. They really don't care if you're LGBT. All they care about is if you can provide a loving home for a child. Even if you're unemployed, low wage or single, you can still adopt.

It's also important for us to point out that there's absolutely loads of online support and groups for LGBTs wanting to adopt, so use them and research as much as you can beforehand. ■



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WORDS MIKE HIRD



NEWQUAY
CORNWALL



Newquay has a bit of a reputation as a hen and stag haven – and it's true that the town itself isn't exactly a Cornish gem. But enough childhood memories of the wild coast and endless sandy beaches have left their mark. So when the prospect of storm watching at the gloriously gothic Headland Hotel reared its head, it seemed too good an offer for us to pass up. And the perfect chance to visit a beautiful part of the world when the parties and piss-ups have gone home for winter…

Perched, as the name suggests, on the headland at the edge of Newquay Town, the Headland stands in judgment over Fistral Beach and in a great position to witness the seasons change in dramatic Technicolor as the Atlantic hurls animated diva strops at the rock-strewn beaches. Offering contemporary and traditional rooms – and a clutch of beautiful luxury cottages for those wanting a little more freedom – the Headland is a grand old lady, but one who's just about got to grips with modern life. And if you're worried that it might not be 'gay enough', the Headland was also the backdrop to the iconic film version of Roald Dahl's perennial favourite The Witches – so feel free to rip off your wig and scream, "I smell children!" at any point. And for added, well, something, there's even a LEGO replica of the hotel that a former guest spent far too long creating. Something for everyone!

Dinner in the main restaurant is a formal affair – although The Terrace offers a more relaxed option with gastropub staples – but impressively so. Maître d' Christoph – who smelled great, by the way – filleted a brilliant Dover sole at the table – a nice bit of old fashioned theatre – but modern fine dining dishes like the crab pasta and a tuna carpaccio with melon held their own, too. The chefs make the most of the produce Cornwall offers and the food sings as a result.

A definite nod to the present comes in the form of the multi-million pound spa that can be found, complete with its own sheltered terrace, in a bright, peaceful lower ground floor. Award-winning and created with a pleasing eye for detail, the spa offers everything you'd expect – including brilliantly bracing deep tissue massages – to knock away the cobwebs the Atlantic winds can't reach.

As fate would have it, the weather during our visit was unseasonably warm and sunny so there wasn't much storm watching to be had. That didn't mean drama was in short supply, though, as the environment can't help but be breathtaking.

A coastal view meant we woke to crashing waves every morning and a possibly misjudged eagerness meant we ended up in them. Dan, a lovely surfer from Cádiz who relocated to Newquay with nary a word of English in him, can be found at the Fistral Beach Surf School, less than five minutes from the Headland. Now fluent, he's the best teacher an unfit lunk from London could've hoped for. Against the odds, and with us being totally novice, Dan had us nearly surfing after just two hours, and totally invigorated for the rest of the trip as a result. Practically unable to move the day after, but hey, we can't recommend enough.

Newquay's reputation as a party town doesn't extend to any gay bars and it isn't exactly picture box Cornwall, either. There are plenty of pubs however, ranging from mammoth family-orientated places like The Fort, which also prides itself on a great menu of locally sourced goodies, to the more 'shooters and scary cocktails' end of the spectrum. The working harbour offers one or two hidden gems, too, like The Boathouse, presided over by the fabulous Nettie. A vision in fuchsia who'll up-sell the shit out of you given half a chance, she and her brilliant fish restaurant should be a Newquay institution if they aren't already. With reggae playing out into the harbour, The Boathouse is a must-visit and it's roasted crab claws a messy must-have.

We visited from Friday to Sunday. Newquay might seem like a long haul for a short trip, but with connections from Gatwick with Flybe, you can be there in little over an hour for the same price as a train ticket. And who doesn't love some pursed-lipped grandeur mixed with genuinely warm and friendly service? Not to mention some of the most spectacular scenery the United Kingdom has to offer. Storm or no storm. ■

GT travelled with Flybe, flybe.com/newquay. **GT stayed** at The Headland Hotel, headlandhotel.co.uk
GT surfed with Fistral Beach Surf School, fistralbeachsurfschool.co.uk

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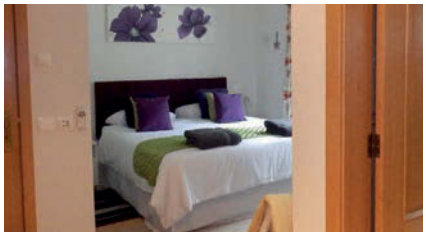
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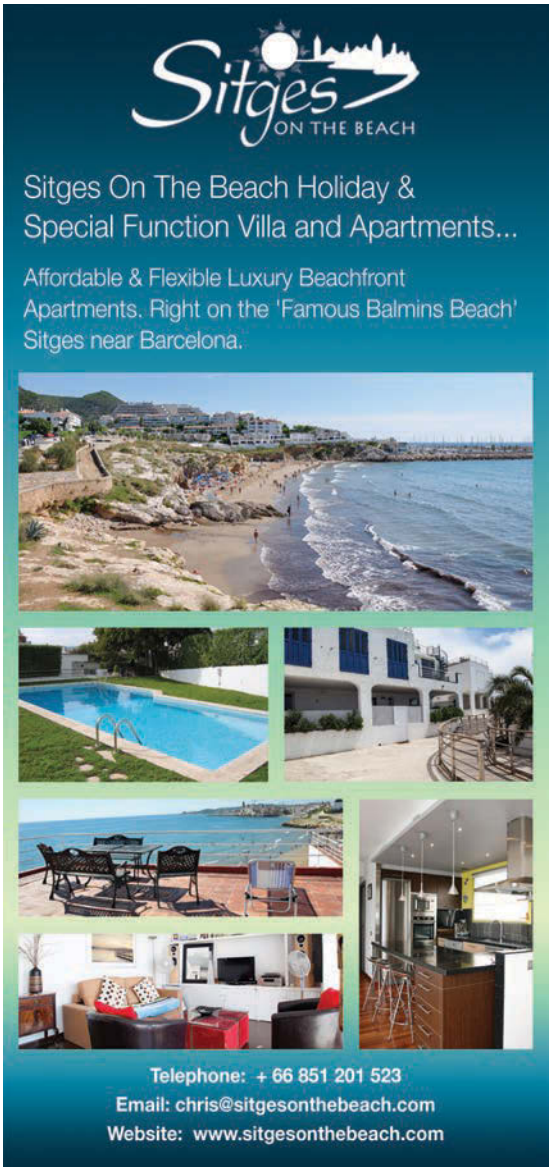
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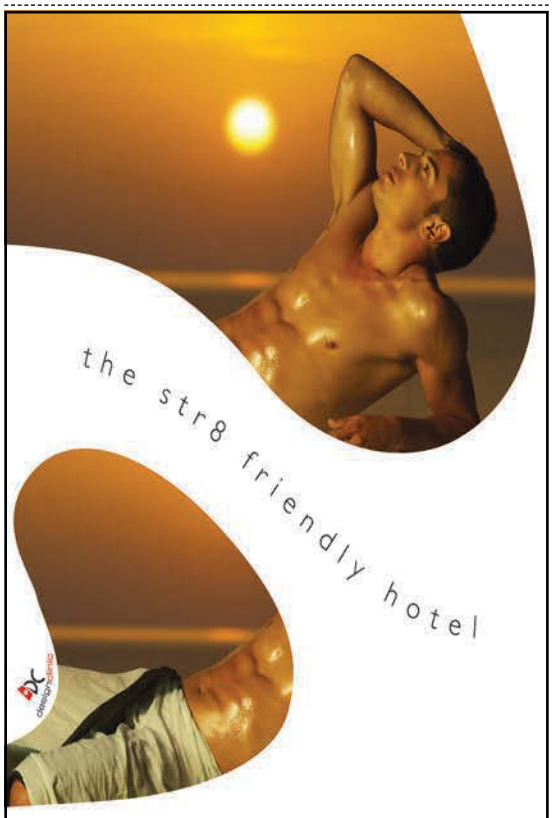
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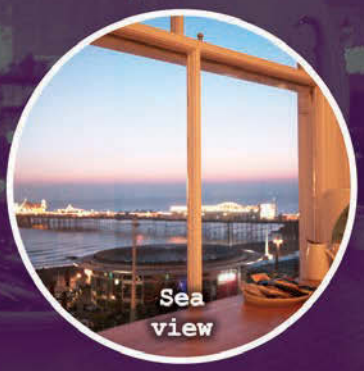
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GT A TO Z

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CLASSIFIED FEATURE

UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

BEING GAY IS WHO YOU ARE. IF YOUR EMPLOYER DOESN'T UNDERSTAND, IT'S TIME TO SEE AN EMPLOYMENT LAWYER.

Sex discrimination at work has been illegal since 1975, race discrimination since 1976 and disability discrimination since 1995. It took until 2003 for sexual orientation discrimination to receive equal protection by law.

The good news is that today's protection under the Equality Act 2010 is wide-reaching.



Ten things you should know about gay rights at work:

1. You have rights from day 1 of your employment. In fact, your rights exist even before that – during the job application and interview process.
2. You can still be employed and bring a claim for sexual orientation discrimination at work.
3. Most people are protected, including employees, soldiers, partners, police officers and some self-employed contractors.
4. It is unlawful to be bullied or harassed because you are gay.
5. Unlawful treatment can also include not being promoted because you are gay or in a civil partnership or being refused dependant's leave for your civil partner or husband.
6. The protection applies if the treatment is because you have a gay friend or family member. It also applies where people are perceived to be gay and are treated less favourably on that basis.
7. Unlawful treatment can be very subtle. Ignoring someone at work can potentially be a form of discrimination.
8. Surprisingly, discrimination is sometimes legally justified, for instance where there is an occupational requirement for employees to be of a particular sexual orientation.
9. 'Positive action' is lawful in certain circumstances – this is where individuals who are underrepresented in the workplace are given more favourable treatment e.g. promotion.
10. Compensation for successful discrimination claims in the Employment Tribunal is unlimited. It includes financial loss and injury to feelings.

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M, 70, 6', medium build, seeks M, who can accom, for fun times & more. Powys. Box 387737 or text ✉ GT 387737

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M, 72, 5'8", medium build, n/s, seeks similar M for fun & f/ship. Co. Antrim. Box 959394 or text ✉ GT 959394

MATURE, EXPERIENCED
M, 76, slightly disabled, seeks M for fun times. York. Box 473975

SINCERE, AFFABLE
M, 67, likes playing bowls & golf. Seeks M, similar age, for walks, chats & lasting r/ship. Co. Antrim. Box 166978

ENJOYS CONVERSATION
M, 69, likes exciting, interesting, all male personal chat. Seeks similar M, 18+. Essex. Box 585049

VERY OPEN-MINDED
M, 41, 6', seeks M for fun times & more. Co. Down. Box 390744

GIRLY, SUBMISSIVE
M, 60s, seeks dominant, masculine M for good times. Ldn. Box 302896

AFFECTIONATE, OLDER
CD, 75, likes dressing, fun & gentle mutual pleasures. WLTM similar CD. Central Scotland. Box 841628

BISEXUAL, FETISHIST
M, 44, loves silky lingerie & dressing up, seeks M or F for adult fun. Essex. Box 235982

PANTY & STOCKING WEARER
M, 58, likes going out & nights in. WLTM similar-aged M with similar interests. Cheshire. Box 161867 or text ✉ GT 161867

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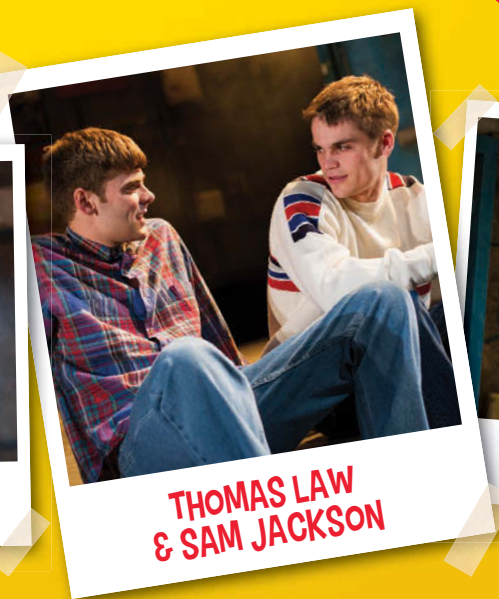
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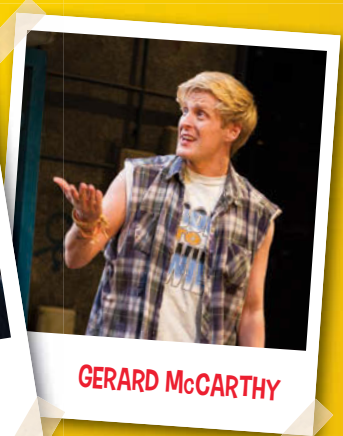
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